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Thursday, 30 August 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Fabius/Mr. Araud	(France)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Musayev
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	Colombia	Ms. Holguín Cuéllar
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Kumar
	Morocco	Mr. El Othmani/ Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	Togo	Mr. Ohin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hague
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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12-47508 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in French*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to participate in this meeting.

I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres and the Ministers of Colombia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Togo, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson.

The Deputy Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to convey the greetings of the Secretary-General, who is currently attending the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Tehran. I am speaking today on his behalf.

I will essentially speak about the humanitarian and security situation in Syria, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Guterres, will address the worsening of the crisis caused by the waves of Syrian refugees to neighbouring countries.

(*spoke in English*)

More than 2.5 million people, including refugees from Palestine and Iraq, are now in grave need of assistance and protection inside Syria. This is more than double the number that Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos reported to the Security Council in March. The most pressing needs include water and sanitation, food and shelter, blankets and health care. Less than half of primary health-care facilities and hospitals in Syria are now fully functional. The destruction of pharmaceutical plants and storage facilities is making drugs and equipment scarce. At the same time, the number of people in need of medical care is increasing.

Access to health facilities has become difficult or impossible in some areas due to violence, checkpoints and fuel shortages. Food prices have tripled in some areas.

A great number of Syrians are internally displaced and are being supported by family or friends; more than 1.2 million others have sought refuge in public buildings such as schools and mosques, which lack adequate water and sanitation.

In response, despite ongoing fighting and intensifying violence, United Nations agencies, the Red Cross, the Red Crescent Movement and their non-governmental organization partners have managed to reach more people in more places every month. In July, World Food Programme food distribution through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and its local partners reached 820,000 people throughout Syria, as compared to 250,000 in April. We are reaching ever more people with non-food items, health kits and water and sanitation services. But — and this is a big "but" — as the conflict intensifies the number of people in need is clearly exceeding our capacity to assist. We are now revising the humanitarian response plan to be able to assist up to 2.5 million people.

Both the Government and the opposition have chosen the path of armed confrontation, with no immediate prospect of an end to the fighting or a resolution of the conflict.

Defections from the army and the Government continue as the brutality of the Government's military response alienates ever more sections of the population. Arms flows from outside appear to be reaching both sides. Military operations have intensified, encompassing all major cities. Indiscriminate shelling with heavy weapons, tanks and air assets has increased.

Civilians and non-combatants, including women and children, face systematic slaughter. There are almost daily reports of atrocities, most recently in Darayya. Those recent accounts of possible war crimes are deeply troubling, and should give us all further impetus to work to end this nightmare. Those responsible in the Government and the military forces, as well as armed opposition groups, must be held accountable for gross human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The withdrawal of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria and its observers is now almost

complete. Throughout its deployment, the Mission provided clear and verified information and was in contact with all parties, under difficult circumstances. I commend those who served under complex and dangerous conditions.

As conditions deteriorate, we see dangerous repercussions for Syria's neighbours. We view with great concern, indeed alarm, the political, social and economic consequences of the movement of large numbers of refugees from Syria to its neighbours. Those consequences must be identified and addressed. The affected Governments, which have generously opened their borders and accepted their responsibility to shelter those who have sought refuge, need urgent support.

There are now more than 220,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. That weighs heavily on local authorities and communities and risks having serious destabilizing effects. The spillover of conflict and violence into neighbouring countries must be prevented. We urge all parties in Syria and neighbouring countries to refrain from cross-border actions that will escalate tensions. In that context, on behalf of the Secretary-General, I call for the release of all who have been kidnapped or are being held hostage, in Syria and elsewhere.

That is the difficult environment in which the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, begins his work. We welcome his presence here today and are grateful that he has accepted this important and heavy responsibility. It is essential that the international community, and the Security Council in particular, unite behind him and his efforts. Separate diplomatic tracks will only prolong the violence, the human rights abuses and the humanitarian crisis.

To meet the increasing humanitarian pressure, we need to urgently address two main issues. The first is humanitarian access. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent has done remarkable work, but it is clearly overstretched. We need the Government to authorize more international non-governmental organizations to operate in the country. And United Nations agencies will need to expand their presence.

At the same time, security has to be improved. Our response is shackled by obstacles, both conflict-related ones and others linked to the increase in criminality, kidnapping and attacks on vehicles. I urge Member States to emphasize to the Government and opposition groups the urgency of guaranteeing the security of aid agencies operating in areas under their control to allow for safe access to civilians and for evacuation.

The second issue is funding. As of yesterday, the $180 million humanitarian response plan was only half-funded. Some critical sectors have received almost no funding at all. Donors should urgently rise to this humanitarian imperative. Hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake.

As the conflict continues, Syria risks undermining its State institutions and losing its cultural and historical heritage. The cohesion of its diverse society is in danger. That will have profound implications for the Syrian people, for the countries of the region and for the world. The massive destruction, the human tragedies and the abuses we are witnessing are the direct consequence of the increased and irresponsible militarization of the conflict. Syrians need fewer weapons, not more. Those who supply the Government or the armed opposition with weapons, equipment or money are creating a vicious circle of violence and are paving the way for more suffering and chaos. Member States with influence on the Syrian Government or the opposition forces have an obligation to end the killing and promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Finally, we note recent calls to establish humanitarian corridors or buffer zones inside Syria where civilians could, it is argued, find relief from the violence. Such proposals raise serious questions and require careful and critical consideration.

(*spoke in French*)

The Syrian people need humanitarian assistance. Ultimately, however, the current crisis will not be resolved in the absence of a credible political process. Such a process should be supported by an unified international community, allowing for an end to the violence and making possible a political transition carried out by Syrians themselves. It is time for all the parties in Syria and abroad the put the interests, dignity and human rights of the people of Syria first. The Syrian people are today the victims of suffering, devastation and divisiveness; while all the while they aspire only to live in peace and to enjoy the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

Mr. Guterres: Syria has a long and generous history of providing refuge to people in need of sanctuary, including Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. It is now particularly heartbreaking to see so many Syrian citizens losing their lives, being uprooted from their homes and becoming trapped in war zones.

As of yesterday, 229,000 people had left the country and sought registration as refugees in neighbouring States. That number is growing rapidly. All sorts of assets are quickly being used up and social support networks are fragmenting. For many, becoming a refugee is the only way to survive.

The number of Syrians arriving each day in Turkey continues to increase dramatically. Thanks to the Turkish Government, more than 80,000 Syrians are now being hosted in camps and public buildings in the south-east of the country. As the fighting intensifies, pressure is increasing at border checkpoints, with thousands of people waiting as new sites are made ready — as is the case at the present moment.

In Jordan the number of refugees arriving each day is also rising. Earlier this week, more than 5,000 people arrived in a span of just 30 hours. Some 72,000 Syrian refugees have now been registered. in total, the Government estimates that there are now approximately 180,000 more Syrians in the country than at the outset of the crisis. Most are hosted by local communities, but in accordance with a decision of the authorities, over 21,000 recent arrivals are being accommodated at the newly established Zaatari refugee camp.

The number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon registered or awaiting registration now exceeds 57,000. They have largely been absorbed into local communities, along with many thousands more who have not yet sought assistance. Efforts are under way with the Government to expand accommodation options, as hosting families are stretched and schools where many hundreds have been sheltered are due to reopen shortly.

In Iraq, a country striving to make its own transition from conflict to stability, the number of Syrian refugees is now more than 18,000.

In those four countries, there has been exemplary cooperation between Governments, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, other United Nations agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations.

Smaller numbers of Syrian citizens have also sought protection beyond the region, in areas such as North Africa and Europe. I am deeply saddened by the drowning of a number of Syrians, including children, earlier this week in th[illegible]Mediterranean.

The most tragic consequences of the crisis are being felt inside Syria itself. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society, supported by the United Nations system and other humanitarian actors, continues to undertake exceptional work in the most difficult circumstances, despite being considerably overstretched. Humanitarian activities, as has been noted, are severely hampered by constraints on access and funding.

UNHCR persists with efforts to provide protection and assistance to Iraqi and other refugees and asylum-seekers in Syria. The commitment of the Syrian people and authorities to maintaining asylum space has been commendable. Refugees are nonetheless exposed to increasing insecurity, which also limits their access to our offices and restricts the movement of staff. Some 31,000 Iraqis have now returned to their own country since the surge in violence in mid-July, while migrant workers and other third-country nationals are also experiencing acute hardship.

Refugees from Palestine in Syria fall within the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Our colleagues at UNRWA need funding to expand their assistance programme, and are very appreciative of the temporary protection afforded in neighboring countries to the relatively few who have been forced to flee.

The refugee exodus is having a significant impact on the society, economy and security of host countries. Thousands of Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese and Turkish families are sharing their homes and their increasingly meager resources with relatives and friends, but mostly strangers, who have been rendered homeless. The large-scale arrival of refugees brings about a significant economic cost, leads to complex social consequences and has a serious impact on local infrastructure and the environment. The acute pressure on water resources in Jordan is just one example.

All of that is taking place in countries also affected by the national security implications of the current crisis. By keeping their borders open to refugees in such a complex and challenging environment, the countries that neighbour the Syrian Arab Republic are providing a very positive example to the world.

However, their capacities are being severely tested. International solidarity in support of their generosity must be urgently reinforced.

The commitment of those countries to refugee protection has upheld the internationally recognized principle whereby all human beings have the right to seek and enjoy asylum in another State. That is a right that must not be jeopardized, for instance through the establishment of so-called safe havens or other similar arrangements. Bitter experience has shown that it is rarely possible to provide effective protection and security in such areas. However, evidently, more effective humanitarian assistance inside the Syrian Arab Republic might well reduce the numbers forced to flee across borders.

As the conflict intensifies, the ability of the international system to respond is being tested in many ways. In that respect, I would like to conclude by making the following appeals.

First, I appeal to all parties to the conflict to grant unrestricted humanitarian access inside the Syrian Arab Republic in order to enable humanitarian actors to deliver protection and assistance without discrimination, in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Secondly, I would like to appeal to the parties to the conflict to continue to respect and provide protection to Iraqi, Palestinian and other refugees inside the Syrian Arab Republic. We are all aware of the complexity of the Palestinian refugee issue and its impact on countries in the region. A situation in which large numbers of Palestinians are forced to flee must be avoided at all costs.

Thirdly, I would like to call for enhanced international support to all victims of the conflict. I urge all States to respond positively to the two appeals that will shortly be made by the humanitarian community for additional funding in countries of asylum and inside the Syrian Arab Republic. However, direct support to the victims is not enough. International solidarity must translate into effective burden- and responsibility-sharing, with meaningful support to Governments and communities in refugee-hosting countries.

Fourthly, I ask all States in the region and beyond to continue to extend protection to the Syrians fleeing their country, and to ensure that the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum is maintained, in accordance with international law.

Finally, we must recognize that there is no humanitarian solution to the Syrian crisis. Only through a political solution leading to peace can the humanitarian emergency be brought to a conclusion. As history has so clearly demonstrated in the Middle East and elsewhere, it is in nobody's interest for a political conflict and the plight of its resultant refugee population to be left unresolved.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nasser Judeh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan.

Mr. Judeh (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on France's presidency of the Council this month at this extremely sensitive juncture. We thank you, Sir, for organizing this meeting at the ministerial level to discuss the dramatic and tragic situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the repercussions of which are being felt beyond the borders of that country, affecting neighbouring countries. I would also like to thank you, Foreign Minister Fabius, for having invited the Syrian Arab Republic's neighbouring countries, including my own country, Jordan.

It is appalling for all of us to recognize that the tragic situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has lasted over a year and a half now, persists and is deteriorating. Likewise, the bloodshed has not ceased, but has increased over that period. The situation has deteriorated to the point that, every day, hundreds of sons and daughters of the Syrian Arab Republic, regardless of age, are engulfed in violence, which continues to increase. The violence is forcing hundreds of thousands of Syrians to flee the country in order to escape the violence and terror, and to seek food.

What we are witnessing today in Syria has far exceeded our fears that Syria could potentially slide into the inferno of civil war. The increase and spread of violence and murder have very clearly begun to tear apart the social fabric of the Syrian Arab Republic and peace in that country. It threatens social cohesion and the unity of the country. This serious threat requires that we act decisively and immediately so that Syria does not fall into a civil and sectarian war, a war that would have repercussions reaching far beyond the Syrian borders, jeopardizing the stability of the entire region.

His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein has expressed Jordan's fears about the disastrous situation in

Syria and our concerns about its possible implications. His Majesty has spoken on the subject on more than one occasion, in particular at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit in Mecca. Our position in Jordan is very clear. We are convinced of the need for a political solution to the Syrian crisis, despite the fact that time seems to be running out. We recognize that circumstances are making such a solution more and more difficult. Still, that is the ideal means — indeed the only means — to resolve the crisis in Syria.

We believe that a political solution must include a transition framework, and that it must be implemented immediately, leading to the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people — aspirations for which it has shed its blood and made bitter sacrifices. Such a solution is the only way to guarantee Syria's political independence and unity. It is the only solution that could lead to internal cohesion and peace. We believe that a political solution is inseparable from a cessation of violence, which was the first step in the six-point plan proposed by Kofi Annan, former Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. I wish to take this opportunity to thank him for his work and his efforts to fulfil his responsibilities.

I also express our gratitude to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi for having agreed to become the new Joint Special Envoy. Jordan supports him, and we express the hope that the international community will likewise unite in supporting him in his extremely difficult mission. We are confident that his experience and competence will assist him in his work, leading to a transition in Syria and to an agreement allowing for a return to stability without external military intervention. Jordan hopes that the Security Council will be able to speak with one voice and undertake united efforts to resolve the humanitarian situation brought on by the political crisis.

Jordan is Syria's closest neighbour, in geography, population and spirit. We are affected by the tragedy along with the Syrian people. While we clearly and unequivocally condemn the violence and the bloodshed taking place in Syria, and while we appeal for its immediate cessation and for the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, at the same time we do not accept any violation of Syria or threats to its social cohesion and domestic peace. We condemn and reject approaches that fuel the events in Syria that have driven more than 180,000 Syrian citizens to cross their borders to seek refuge in Jordan.

Despite the economic and financial difficulties and our limited means in water and energy, it is with good will, founded in our deep and organic relationship with the Syrian people, that we share our resources with our Syrian brothers. For the same reasons we will open the doors of our educational institutions and health facilities, offering them services free of charge, as if they were Jordanian citizens. As I speak here to the Council it is almost midnight in Jordan. As our Syrian brothers cross the border by night their numbers may have swelled to 186,000 by the end of my statement — and even more by the end of this meeting. I say that based on the number of Syrians who have crossed the border in the past four days — 12,000 refugees. It is important in that regard to state that, despite the challenges we face, given our limited means even under normal circumstances, we have not taken any steps in Jordan to prevent the entry of the increasing number of refugees.

Nevertheless, we are quickly approaching a dangerous situation whereby we will exceed by twice our capacity, and the massive flow could lead to consequences for public order and general security, forcing us to take measures to fulfil our responsibilities to our own population for its security. I therefore appeal to the international community to help us respond to the humanitarian, health and educational needs of our Syrian brothers on our territory. I thank those States and international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, that have provided us assistance in facing the difficult burden of having refugees in our territory.

The Government of Jordan has launched a joint appeal, along with the United Nations, detailing the priorities and needs of our Syrian brothers now living in Jordan. Copies of that appeal will be distributed to those wishing to offer assistance. I reaffirm our support to any who offer humanitarian assistance to those in need of it inside Syria, through recognized international mechanisms and procedures. I also reiterate that any humanitarian assistance provided to Syria will also help Jordan in responding to the needs of Syrians in Jordan, especially in matters of health and education.

(*spoke in English*)

Human suffering requires the international community to be united, and assisting in coping with the humanitarian tragedy in Syria requires us all to be committed. Our Syrian brothers and sisters in Jordan, Turkey and other neighbouring countries are in desperate need of serious help. The countries that are

hosting them are in serious need of help, logistical and otherwise, in coping with the humanitarian tragedy.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The initiative to invite Syria's neighbouring States was a wise one. We hope that it will occur periodically in order to facilitate a follow-up of the developing situation in Syria at the ministerial level.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Davutoğlu (Turkey): I wish to start by expressing our thanks to the French presidency and to you, personally, Sir, for organizing this timely and very important meeting on Syria and inviting us, the neighbouring countries that have borne the brunt of the crisis in Syria. I also extend our appreciation to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their lucid and comprehensive briefings on the situation.

When I received the invitation to the meeting I decided without any hesitation to come, as it was a meeting of the Security Council, which is the primary organ for the maintenance of international peace and security, on the issue of Syria that has been seriously threatening both regional and global peace and security for a long time. Itseemed that the meeting would be very significant as it had been organized by the Security Council after an absence of the action and determination required to put an end to the brutality and bloodshed that has been taking place in Syria for the past 18 months.

I was particularly encouraged by the fact that the humanitarian dimension, which calls for urgent action, would be on the agenda, and thus became hopeful that the Council would finally act with one voice to take long-overdue steps in the context of the humanitarian issue. Apparently I was wrong in my expectations. I understand that today the Council will, yet again, be unable to put forward a unified position to stop the humanitarian tragedy. This meeting will not end with even a presidential or a press statement, let alone a robust resolution.

Not even all Council members are represented at this meeting at the level of foreign minister. While I regret the absence of some of my colleagues, I would like to believe that their non-participation is not an indication of their level of interest and concern in view of the developments in Syria.

The situation in Syria needs no further description. Everything is taking place in front of our eyes. Every day a new massacre is being committed against the Syrian people. Now, the egime has started to deploy fighter jets against people in the cities, in addition to using heavy artillery and tanks.

How long will we sit and watch while an entire generation is wiped out by random bombardment and deliberate mass targeting, as in Azaz or Aleppo? Let us not forget that if we do not act against such crimes against humanity happening before our very eyes, we will become accomplices to those crimes.

We need to ask ourselves whether our good conscience is comfortable about such inaction. We need to ask ourselves how we will explain such inaction when we preach to coming generations about being virtuous and righteous. Do we really need to revisit experiences of the 1990s and earlier and repeat the same mistakes? We know very well the cost of procrastination — Srebrenica, Halabja and Gaza. In all of those cases we lost civilians. All of those cases have entered the annals of history as the symbols of the heavy price paid by the civilian population because the Security Council did not act in time. There is no reason to make that notorious list any longer.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged during his recent visit to the Balkans that, "We must learn from the lessons of Srebrenica." He continued, "The international community failed to provide the necessary protection to many people who were killed at the time when they needed our support", in Srebrenica.

That is what is happening right now in Syria. Although the international community has made its position in view of the situation in Syria abundantly clear — through several General Assembly resolutions that each passed with more than 130 votes in favour — the Security Council still has failed to provide the necessary protection to the people of Syria who need our support. We cannot again place the United Nations in such an uncomfortable situation of apologizing for inaction or negligence related to the tragic situation in Syria.

We in Turkey open our doors to every Syrian brother and sister who runs for safety, regardless of his or her religion, sect or ethnicity. We embrace every Syrian brother and sister. The number of Syrians we are accommodating is now greater than 80,000. Currently, another 10,000 Syrians are waiting at our borders for accommodation. We are constantly building new camps

to host them. However, it takes approximately one month to build a camp that will usually become full after two days, as the average number of daily entries is about 4,000.

Currently we accommodate the Syrian refugees in 11 camps, comprising both tent and container cities. Three new camps, each with capacity for 10,000 refugees, are under construction. We provide for all of their needs, including education, health, vocational training, social and psychological support and leisure.

Since the intense influx exceeds our capacity to accommodate, we have had to mobilize every means at hand to fill the gap. In that vein, we have opened up student dormitories and gyms while the schools remain on summer break. Currently, 17,000 Syrians are being accommodated in such centres. However, the schools will open in just a couple of days.

Yes, we are building new camps and will try to transfer them to those camps. Yet we are fast becoming short of suitable areas to build camps, as well as means to support them. I have not even mentioned the tens of thousands of Syrians who escaped to Turkey and are living in various cities and towns and putting an extra strain on local resources and infrastructure.

We do all of that with a sense of high responsibility as we regard our Syrian neighbours as our brothers and sisters with whom we share a long history and often a common fate. We will continue to stand in full solidarity with them and to address their needs. However, the scale of the tragedy in Syria is growing so out of proportion that Turkey is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the ensuing challenges all alone.

Up until now, we have provided funding for accommodation, upkeep and other services. The amount that we have spent so far has exceeded $300 million and keeps rising each day. But the financial issue is secondary as compared to the humanitarian issue.

We have already informed the international community of our readiness to accept assistance offers. While expressing our gratitude to those countries that have responded, I must also report that the overall response fell far short of what was required.

As to the appeal by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for $193 million under the regional response plan, the international community has so far funded only $65 million, or 34 per cent. However, Turkey's share from that amount can only be considered symbolic. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not here today to mention those figures in order to complain about our Syrian brothers and sisters coming to Turkey, nor am I asking for more funding.

We will continue to try to do our best in providing the best possible services in full conformity with international rules and regulations, as UNHCR representatives have praised our efforts and principled approach. However, there is an increasing sense in Turkey that, through making such a sacrifice and tackling an enormous issue on its own, we will lead the international community towards complacency and inaction. We feel that the open-door policy of Turkey and Syria's other neighbours is in fact absorbing any potential international reaction, as the tragic consequences of the brutality by the Syrian regime are all being dealt with by the neighbouring countries.

However, given the fact that we are using up all of our capabilities and our preparations can no longer cope with the flow of refugees, attempts to tackle the current influx by regular measures will meet serious difficulties. Therefore, from now on we must focus on steps necessary within the borders of Syria. In that vein, we have started to deliver humanitarian aid at point zero, namely, at the border. We have also established relief reception centres in Kilis, Gaziantep and Hatay — our border cities — for that purpose. Relief items stockpiled at those centres are delivered to the Syrians by the Turkish Red Crescent.

We have formally informed the United Nations of the operation. It was a necessary step as the millions of people who are unable to escape are in acute need of help. The threat of famine is looming as we approach winter. The wounded cannot get treatment, because Syria's clinics and hospitals are either being bombed by the regime or lack the equipment essential for treating people. Although we are opening our hospitals and treating every Syrian who is in need, many cannot make it to the border and usually die from loss of blood.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, there are more than 2 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Syria. In the face of a humanitarian disaster of such proportions, the United Nations should begin establishing IDP camps within Syria without delay. Needless to say, such camps should have full protection.

Let me also be clear that there is only one side that is responsible for this tragedy: the regime in Syria. None of the refugees are fleeing Syria because of the opposition groups, which are struggling to stop the killings there. The refugees coming to Turkey and the other neighbouring countries are fleeing the Syrian regime, not other forces. The Syrian people are the victims of that oppression.

The situation in Syria has long been a threat to international peace and security. That makes it the direct responsibility of the Security Council. It is the Council's duty to take action to develop the necessary responses to the pressing challenges that Syria poses. We therefore appeal to Council members to take on the responsibility for putting an end to the atrocities the regime has committed against the people of Syria, enabling a democratic transition in accord with the legitimate demands of the people and thereby restoring security and stability in our part of the world.

We all have an interest in the developments in Syria. Our views may diverge, but our objectives, I believe, converge. We are all for Syria's security, stability and prosperity. The territorial integrity and national unity of Syria is sacrosanct for all of us. None of us is interested in imposing anything on Syria by force. No matter what we discuss here or there, it will be the Syrian people who will have the final say on their country and their destiny. They will decide their life, their governance and their future. However, all of us have a huge interest in bringing the current conflict in Syria to an end as quickly as possible. The longer the strife continues, the more difficult the new period will be. Radical and terrorist organizations and groups will enjoy fertile ground. We cannot let that happen. Regional and global security, as well as our own, will be at stake.

The Cold War era is long behind us. Accordingly, we must put behind us the reflexes and mindset that stem from that era. We must put behind us any sterile power struggles and competing interests. The United Nations is facing a serious test. That test is about whether or not the Organization can represent the good conscience of the international community and act in accordance with it. In other words, it is about whether it can translate humanity into practice or not. So far, the track record has not been promising.

For instance, when Mr. Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, took up his job, on 23 February, the number of Syrians seeking protection in Turkey was approximately 10,000. When the first group of United Nations monitors arrived in Syria, on 16 April, the number of refugees went up to 25,000. When the monitors left, on 20 August, the number had reached 70,000. Today it is more than 80,000. The United Nations cannot afford to fail this test. Failure on such an issue would be irredeemable, and the regional implications in particular could be disastrous.

We are taking the necessary steps to minimize the negative ramifications of the Syrian situation as they affect Jordan, Iraq and, in particular, Lebanon, since regional security and stability is our national priority. However, the longer the pressure from the crisis in Syria continues to build, the more difficult it will be to keep the countries in the region immune to ripple effects. All this renders the task of the new Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Brahimi, a daunting one. We welcome his appointment and wish him every success. He will receive our full support, as his predecessor did.

I understand that it cannot be easy for the Council to comprehend the scope of the challenges and threats that Syria's neighbours are facing merely through media reports or second-hand observations. That is why I think it would be very useful for Security Council members to come to Turkey and the other neighbouring countries and visit some of the camps. I am sure that the camp residents would be very interested in what Council members have to say and the kinds of solutions they would bring to their acute and tragic problems.

Similarly, I am sure that Council members would be very interested to hear the vivid stories of the ordeals that Syrian people have endured at the hands of the shabiha or of the regime's forces. Many of them may be very disturbing. But shying away from such things as summary executions, brutal rapes and mass killings of entire families with babies in cradles will not make them go away. All of them are real and are part of the reason that such a large number of people have sought refuge.

Under the circumstances, we wish to suggest that the United Nations should take the following practical steps in order to deal with the current humanitarian disaster in Syria.

First, the Security Council should visit the camps in the countries bordering Syria in order to see the impact of the situation and get first-hand information about it.

Secondly, the Council should pursue a unified approach to stopping the indiscriminate aerial bombardment of residential areas, which leads to mass internal displacement.

Thirdly, the focus should be on solving the issue of IDPs within Syria's borders.

Fourthly, if, despite such steps, Syrians are still compelled to flee for safety, the necessary measures should be taken to absorb them internationally.

Lastly, a joint committee, made up of the neighbouring countries and UNHCR, could be established to deal with the refugee issue. Such a committee should be given a mandate by the Security Council and could also facilitate the work of the Joint Special Envoy.

As I said at the beginning, I was expecting this meeting to produce tangible solutions to the suffering of the Syrian people. But we still have nothing new to say to the millions of Syrians who are suffering at the hands of the regime, as the United Nations system finds itself trapped in inaction. The people of Syria find this situation extremely difficult to understand.

Nonetheless, even if the United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, continues to be paralysed while the regime in Syria violates every known value, law and moral principle, Turkey will continue to uphold the principles of the United Nations — on its own, if necessary — and defend the moral values dictated by the good conscience of the international community. We are facing not just a serious crisis but a test of our humanity. If we shy away from our responsibilities today, we will be accountable to future generations and face the harsh verdict of history. Humanity must always prevail over insanity and cruelty.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Faour (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the French presidency for convening this important meeting, designed to find an approach and, it is to be hoped, a solution to this sensitive and painful issue.

The Arab region is facing exceptional and historic challenges in the form of the outbreak of the Arab revolutions and calls for basic rights such as democracy, freedom and human rights. While some Arab peoples have secured victories and rid themselves of dictatorships, others are still suffering from killings, oppression and displacement as they struggle to achieve basic rights. With the outbreak of the events in Syria, that country's people have made enormous sacrifices that have led to tens of thousands martyred, wounded, missing or detained.

At Lebanon's national level, and in view of the organic ties and historical and geographic factors that link it to Syria, the Lebanese Government, on the instructions of its President, General Michel Sleiman, and Prime Minister, Mr. Najib Mikati, has adopted a position that has been described as one of distancing, seeking to neutralize Lebanon from the negative repercussions of the conflict in Syria and to prevent the Syrian crisis from being imported into Lebanon. If that policy has achieved a formula that will help it avoid those negative repercussions and bridge the divisions in Lebanese society concerning the rapid and intensifying developments in Syria, while maintaining freedom of expression and protecting diversity in Lebanon, the Lebanese Government has not been idle in the face of the influx of displaced Syrians into Lebanon.We are fully committed to separating political considerations from the humanitarian needs. That continues to be a basic principle of official Lebanese policy. That clear, formal commitment on the part of the Lebanese Government is not just based on international legitimacy, conventions, international law and human rights; it is also grounded in the historical relations between the peoples of Lebanon and Syria.

Those relations have been manifested in various forms of brotherly solidarity at various times, free from political considerations and interests. The most recent example was when the Syrian people accommodated thousands of Lebanese displaced during Israel's aggression in July 2006. That aggression resulted in the killing of more than 1,000 Lebanese and the wounding and displacement of thousands of others, as well as the total destruction of several villages and towns. Incidentally, that was not the first instance of Israeli aggression against Lebanon and its sovereignty. Israel has habitually violated our sovereignty, all too often refusing to abide by international laws and norms or to implement any resolution of the Security Council.

To return to the situation in Lebanon, with some exceptions here and there, my country has been successful in reducing the danger of the Syrian crisis spilling over into Lebanese territory. The outbreak of

the crisis has served to inject yet another controversial issue into Lebanese society. However, the main political indicators show that there is consensus in Lebanon on the need to avoid, as much as possible, the spillover into Lebanon of the complicated and serious crisis in Syria. Were that to happen, it would push Lebanon once again towards an unknown abyss of war and tension.

Needless to say, like other neighbouring States, Lebanon has received tens of thousands of refugees fleeing the violence and bombardment in various regions in Syria. Lebanon's official position on dealing with displaced persons has essentially entailed a humanitarian approach independent of the political affiliations of the various sectors of Lebanese society. That is the principle that the Lebanese Government is seeking to consolidate and pursue in its actions.

The Lebanese Government has reaffirmed that it is keen to protect all displaced Syrians. Given the current situation, handing any of them over to Syrian authorities would place their lives in danger. That is fully in line with the principles of international law. I should therefore like, on behalf of the Government of Lebanon, to avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate that Lebanon is fully committed to accommodate, assist and protect Syrian refugees irrespective of their political inclinations or affiliations.

Along with the displacement of thousands of Syrian citizens, Lebanon has also faced the influx of thousands of Palestinians — as if that oppressed people had not suffered enough in the course of 60 years of being deprived of their rights under Israeli occupation and in the face of the inaction and inability of the international community. They are facing displacement once again: from their camps in Syria to Lebanon. In honouring our international commitments, the Lebanese Government affirms that it will work to coordinate and cooperate with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide support, assistance and relief to our Palestinian brothers and sisters seeking refuge.

It is also worth mentioning that the Syrian army's dropping of bombs inside Lebanese territory is resulting in grave danger to innocent Lebanese citizens along the borders.

Lebanon continues to face an economic and financial crisis that is being exacerbated by the absence of political stability, including insecurity at certain stages. That makes it important to request assistance from the international Organization, including material and moral support, so as to ensure the success of the Lebanese Government's efforts to accommodate and assist tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. That requires an emergency plan to help weak and marginalized groups.

Lebanon has always been on the side of international legitimacy. We are a founding Member of the United Nations. We served on the drafting committee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Lebanon has long been independent and democratic. Lebanon has always been committed to human rights and fundamental freedoms. That makes it incumbent upon us to be more concerned about refugees and their needs. But that cannot be possible unless we receive sufficient support from the international community.

Through its various departments and in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and various agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Lebanese Government has for several months provided assistance, housing, primary medical care and treatment for the sick and wounded. We are also accommodating Syrian students in Lebanese schools. However, the influx of a large number of additional displaced persons in the past two months, in particular from Damascus and other areas, has placed new burdens and challenges on us. The Government has drawn up plans to face those challenges in an organized and effective manner.

I hope that this meeting will serve as an opportunity to come up with a comprehensive vision for providing for the humanitarian needs of the brotherly Syrian people, including through Lebanon's assistance, so as to meet our responsibilities to those displaced in Syria at this difficult time.

The great Arabic prison has begun to collapse, with all the grave challenges and dangers that entails. However, as a great Lebanese martyr put it, freedom and democracy are undertakings worth suffering for.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Doreky (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank your delegation, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting at the ministerial level to discuss humanitarian issues in Syria, which are the subject of exceptional attention in my country, countries of the region and the international community as a whole owing to the humanitarian

dimensions and the great and dangerous repercussions that this matter has on the future of security and stability in the entire region.

Iraq is deeply committed to the security and stability of the region. We have therefore from the outset expressed our grave concern about the escalation of the crisis in Syria, not only because it is a neighbour and a sister country but because, more than any other country in the region, it has been a victim of the evils of terrorism, killing and violence. Iraq therefore understands more than anyone else the dangers of the events in its neighborhood. We continue to call for the increasing suffering to be addressed responsibly, in order to stop the Syrian bloodshed and establish the necessary atmosphere to begin a comprehensive political reform process, agreed upon by the representatives of the Syrian people, that leads to the achievement of their legitimate aspirations for democracy and reform while simultaneously safeguarding the security, integrity and stability of Syria, and thereby the security, integrity and stability of the other countries of the region.

Iraq is determined to play an active role as Chair of the Summit of the League of Arab States. We have therefore worked tirelessly to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis by introducing an initiative focused on establishing two negotiating tracks. The first would be an internal Syrian dialogue, while the second would entail an Arab-Syrian dialogue under the auspices of the League of Arab States to peaceably resolve the crisis.

Along with its Arab brothers and friends in the framework of the Action Group for Syria, Iraq has also worked energetically to produce the Geneva communiqué, which put forward a road map based on three pillars. The first pillar entails the various steps needed to implement the Kofi Annan six-point plan, including the immediate cessation of all forms of violence. The second pillar concerns principles for a political transition process that fulfils the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The third pillar has to do with providing the necessary support to the efforts of the United Nations and the Joint United Nations-League of Arab States Special Envoy to reach the goal of establishing a comprehensive political process with Syrian leadership. We continue strongly to believe that the six-point plan and the Geneva document could lead to resolving the crisis if the necessary support were provided to Lakhdar Brahimi's mission.

Given Iraq's historic responsibility dictated by the exceptional circumstances in the Arab region, my country believes that the continuation of foreign interference, regardless of its origin or focus, in supporting one side or the other will not lead to resolving the crisis, but will exacerbate it and thereby worsen the Syrian people's humanitarian situation. We therefore feel that stopping interference in the Syrian issue and clearing the way for the efforts of Joint Special Representative Brahimi are the minimum conditions necessary for achieving a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis.

Iraq's position is always to stand by the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and their right to self-determination and to themselves decide their political future. Iraq supports the political process of a peaceful political transition of power and condemns the acts of killing, violence, bombardment and violations of human rights. It also condemns the militarization of the conflict and calls for an end to foreign interference. We are also concerned about the consequences of the Syrian crisis as manifested in the spread of extremism and terrorism. We support every Arab, regional and international effort to help achieve a just and honourable political solution.

Like other countries of the region, Iraq, which is linked to fraternal Syria by bonds of neighbourliness and brotherhood, has taken on its burden of Syrian refugees — in addition to the thousands of Iraqis living in Syria who have returned to Iraq. That has compelled the Iraqi Government to deal with two issues, namely, addressing the situation of returning Iraqis and providing a safe haven for their brothers, the Syrian refugees.

There are currently more than 15,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq. Despite all the difficulties, the Iraqi Government has decided to establish a relief committee, chaired by the Iraqi Minister of Immigration and including the pertinent ministries and the Iraqi Red Crescent working in cooperation and coordination with relevant international organizations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Government has allocated 50 billion dinars from its emergency reserves to build refugee camps for Syrian refugees and to provide for their basic needs.

My Government believes in the importance of every effort to resolve the issue of refugees in neighbouring countries, so as to face up to this humanitarian crisis. However, such efforts should be based on the circumstances and be governed by the developments

in the crisis. The most viable and dynamic solution would be to address the root causes of the crisis from a perspective that encourages the parties to negotiate through a framework geared towards a comprehensive political process that spares the brotherly Syrian people from the scourge of violence, killing and terrorism and provides for a bright future of peace and security free from the spectre of displacement and having to flee to a neighbouring country.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France.

There are already 25,000 dead, 250,000 wounded, more than 250,000 refugees and more than 1 million Syrians displaced within their own country — including more than 2 million people directly affected, often without food, electricity, medicine or water. In the courageous and magnificent country of Syria, the situation is increasingly intolerable. I regret to say that that is essentially because Mr. Bashar Al-Assad wants, against all odds, to retain power through barbaric repression and savage fighting. He is indiscriminately using heavy weapons, helicopter gunships and fighter jets against his population, even threatening to use his stockpiles of bacteriological and chemical weapons.

Given that situation, which is an affront to the human conscience, France's conviction is that we need to do our utmost and try everything possible to put an end to the violence and, from the humanitarian perspective, bring relief to the civilian population. That is the point of today's meeting.

Many are already acting to provide material support to the refugees, together with the United Nations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Europe and others. I specifically commend the efforts of Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Guterres. For its part, France is working on the humanitarian front while also working on the political front by providing support to the opposition. On the diplomatic front, we are providing support to Mr. Brahimi and trying to put an end to the stalemate and divisiveness that to date have impeded international action under a Security Council mandate.

Bearing witness and responding is what we are doing — a moral obligation in the face of the raging violence. It is also a duty of solidarity vis-à-vis the suffering of Syrians and of the people hosting them. And it is a necessity with regard to security, given the risk of destabilization for the entire region. By bringing Council members together today we wanted to place each country represented here before its responsibilities. As speakers have mentioned, we are thousands of kilometers from towns that have just begun to enter our public discourse — Darayya, Aleppo, Homs, Dara'a and Damascus — martyred cities that are mourning their dead and wounded.

We receive news of suffering and distress on a daily basis. An unacceptable humanitarian situation prevails in the Syrian Arab Republic, but it also exists in neighbouring countries. That is why I wanted them to be represented here. I saw it personally when I visited Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Those neighbouring countries, in addition to Iraq and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whom I thank for being here, have come here to provide their direct testimony. No one will henceforth be able to claim that they did not know.

There is emotion in my voice, as in others', and there is anger. I know that anger is shared by many people worldwide who cannot understand why we allow Mr. Bashar Al-Bassad to murder his people in this way, or why the Security Council of the United Nations has to date been unable to ensure neither security nor unity.

What can we do in the short term? The urgent need is, above all, humanitarian. The divisions in the Security Council should not prevent us from acting to provide relief with respect to the humanitarian tragedy in Syria.

Allow me to turn, for a moment, to the Syrian authorities represented here to remind them of their obligations stemming from international law and international humanitarian law. The use of heavy artillery against one's own people constitutes a crime, as do extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, torture and violence against medical personnel. It would appear that Mr. Al-Assad is perpetrating them all. Those crimes should not go unpunished. Many of us believe that the International Criminal Court should consider this matter so that those responsible can be tried.

I would also remind the representative of Damascus here that access for humanitarian workers to the population must be guaranteed. To date, because of the growing insecurity as well as restrictions by the current authorities, humanitarian workers still

do not have free access to those areas where civilian populations are in distress. Some of those organizations have even been forced to reduce their staffing levels. I therefore call on the representative of Damascus to comply with the agreement reached on 28 May with the United Nations to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance. Local and international non-governmental organizations — whom I join the Council in commending — the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and United Nations humanitarian agencies must have free access to all populations.

I also call on the representative of Damascus to implement the humanitarian pause that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has for months called for to enable humanitarian workers to evacuate and treat the wounded, as well as to guarantee security for medical workers in order enable them to have access to all those who have been wounded, rather than arresting or even killing them.

Earlier this week, I met with an international organization of Syrian doctors that was clandestinely and very courageously providing care to people on the ground. Those doctors have already lost almost 100 of their colleagues, and they report that some 700 of them have been arrested, with no news of them to this day. They treat and operate on children, women and innocent civilians whose blood is flowing because the authorities have attacked them. And what reason do the authorities cite when they come to arrest them? They say they are arresting them because they have blood on their hands. Of course, it is the blood of the wounded who these doctors are in fact trying to save.

Given the refugee situation, outside assistance is being organized, and our meeting today is aimed at stepping up that mobilization. As many have said today, the international community must support the host countries, which are undertaking enormous efforts, as well as the humanitarian workers, United Nations agencies, local and international non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in their difficult tasks. Clearly, neighbouring countries alone cannot assume the burden posed by the presence of Syrian refugees on their territories.

Turkey, in solidarity with the Syrian population, is dealing with a significant influx of refugees. Jordan has issued an appeal, together with local United Nations agencies, to procure international assistance. In the light of the influx of refugees, the threat exists for a destabilization in the political and security situation. In Lebanon, as we all know, the needs are enormous and the seeds of discord are present. Lebanon must be protected from the risk of a spillover of the Syrian crisis. In Iraq, as we have heard, the situation is challenging.

Like a number of countries here, France is mobilizing efforts for the Syrian people and the States of the region. Beyond our support to non-governmental organizations, the ICRC and United Nations agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, we have deployed a special surgical group to the Zaatari camp in Jordan. Our doctors and surgeons are also providing assistance to victims of the fighting and to refugees fleeing conflict zones.

However, as every speaker has pointed out, more financial resources are needed. France initially earmarked just over €3 million for refugees and humanitarian assistance in Syria. As the situation has continued to worsen, I should like to announce that we have decided to increase our support by €5 million. We have also succeeded in having the European Union increase its humanitarian assistance. That will bring the overall total to €100 million to finance the response to the Syrian crisis. France will of course assume its share of that, namely, over €20 million.

The refugee situation is challenging for neighbouring countries. It is serious. However, it should not lead us to overlook the dramatic plight of many Syrians in their own country. I am referring in particular to numbers that speakers have already cited: the more than 1 million people — some say nearly 2 million — who have been displaced, or directly affected, and have found refuge in very precarious and often unbearable conditions in areas freed by the Free Syrian Army. Turkey has raised the possibility of establishing buffer zones for the displaced persons — an that idea needs to be studied.

Concerning displaced people, France has decided to step up its support to the local solidarity networks operating on the ground and laying the groundwork for the Syria of tomorrow. We see that the courageous citizens of a growing number of villages, cities and regions have freed themselves from the yoke of the Al-Assad regime and have begun to organize. The needs in such liberated zones are significant and include food, trash disposal and access to education and care. We believe that the international community, as represented here, is duty-bound to come to their assistance. This week, French President François Hollande announced our decision to provide direct

assistance to the revolutionary committees that are organizing the liberated areas and to establish specific aid for these populations.

Of course, we cannot be content with a purely humanitarian approach. For, as many speakers have underscored, the humanitarian and political issues are related, even if we indeed need a specifically humanitarian effort.

On the political front, a transition needs to be quickly undertaken. To reach that goal, as the Council knows, France encourages the opposition to form a transitional Government to serve as Syria's legitimate representative. Such a Government — which is obviously not up to us to appoint it — should be broadly representative and guarantee the rights of all communities. We have also said that we would recognize that Government once it is formed.

I would like to say to those who have especially close relations with the Al-Assad regime that, as everyone knows, the regime will fall. However, the longer that the conflict is allowed to fester, the longer the stalemate will persist and the longer the transition will take; and, in the end, the greater will be the risk of destabilization for the entire region owing to a conflict that would no longer be local, but regional and even international in character.

To those who support the regime I say that if they continue to do so, they will doubtless lose in every respect. Mr. Al-Assad will fall. When that happens, in the eyes of Syrians, the Arab world and all global opinion, they will be guilty of being accessories to a longstanding crime. They should instead do everything possible to respond to the humanitarian tragedy, put an end to the violence and join us in working towards a timely political transition.

In its presidency of the Council, as I said earlier, France sought this ministerial level meeting to help solve the humanitarian issues, to urge all parties to live up to their responsibilities and to send a message of support and solidarity to the suffering Syrian people from its friends. I hope that that message will be heard. We know that the Council is divided. Nevertheless, there is no other path than abiding by international law. France remains true to its commitment to that path and asserts the necessity of the United Nations and the Security Council taking acting towards a settlement of the Syrian crisis. That is necessary now and it will be necessary when in the future Syria will have to be rebuilt as a free, peaceful and democratic country — the Syria for which a majority of Syrians are so bravely fighting today. We must rise to the level of those fighters' courage.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Mr. El Othmani (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, Mr. President, to express to you and to your friendly country our sincere and deep appreciation for France's principled positions, its bold initiatives and its prominent role as a permanent member of the Security Council. The success of the French presidency of the Council this month, culminating in today's ministerial meeting, is eloquent testimony to France's engagement and to the central role it plays in the United Nations.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

It is our hope that this meeting will result in a robust, unified commitment on the part of the international community to extend a helping hand to the Syrian people and to put an end to the spiral of violence that it is living through. We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their comprehensive briefings.

About 17 months ago, large numbers of Syrian people from all sectors came out to peacefully voice their legitimate demands for democracy and human rights. They were met with oppression, violence and the use of excessive force. Because of the failure of the international community, especially the Security Council, to deal resolutely and decisively with the deteriorating situation in Syria, recent months have seen the crisis develop into an armed conflict — a conflict characterized by the use of heavy weapons, tanks and warplanes against populated areas and by the proliferation of kidnappings, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions and serious violations of human rights and international law.

As the representative of the Group of Arab States in the Security Council, the Kingdom of Morocco has spared no effort, in coordination with other Arab countries, to push for an end to the violence and for finding a political solution that would stop the bloodletting of the Syrian people, spare them the scourges of war and ensure them the exercise of all their rights under a democratic regime in which all segments of Syrian society participate. To act on that commitment, the Kingdom of Morocco contributed to

the Arab League observer mission and to the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. We did so in the hope, at a minimum, of helping to achieve an end to the violence and finding a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Morocco has worked effectively in support of resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly.

Faced with the unlikelihood of a political settlement, the widening scope of the violence now encompassing most villages and towns in Syria and the grave threats to Syrian civilians and to peace and security in the region, the Kingdom of Morocco once again expresses its profound concern over those serious developments and reiterates its denunciation of the grave violations of rights, especially the rights of women and children. We call on the international community, led by the Security Council, to adopt courageous decisions allowing for a prompt intervention to end the violence, protect civilians, stop the human rights violations and seek a peaceful transfer of power. In coordination with its brother Arab States and its fellow Council members, the Kingdom of Morocco will continue to pursue those objectives.

We commend the tireless efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan towards an abatement of the crisis. We also congratulate Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi on his appointment as Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. We wish him success in his mission in the service of the interests of our brother Syrian people and in restoring stability to the region.

It is with great sadness and regret that we follow the bitter humanitarian situation our brothers and sisters in Syria are living through, manifesting itself especially in the acute shortage of food, potable water, housing, sanitation, sewage treatment and other necessities of life. According to United Nations data, more than 3 million people have been harmed by the conflict, including the 2.5 million who are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and the more than 1 million internally displaced persons who face conditions of abject poverty. Moreover, United Nations reports have documented that children have been deliberately subjected to serious violations such as arbitrary detention, abuse, torture, mutilation, murder and the use of them as human shields. Women have also been subjected to various kinds of violations, including sexual and physical assault and arbitrary detention.

Despite the support provided by the United Nations, its humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations, the humanitarian assistance shortage remains acute because of the lack of financial resources and, in many regions, because of the difficulty in reaching those in need due to the fighting. It is incumbent upon all parties to honour the requirements of international humanitarian law as it applies to the protection of civilians — especially women and children — and to human rights.

The High Commissioner for Refugees informed us today that more than 200,000 Syrian refugees have been registered in four neighbouring States. That is in addition to scores of thousands who are unregistered. The escalating violence in Syria and the systematic and ongoing use of heavy weapons and aircraft push that number up daily. On behalf of the Kingdom of Morocco, I would like to take this opportunity to express to the fraternal and friendly States of Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq our great appreciation for standing by the Syrian people during this difficult and crucial period and for generously hosting Syrian refugees in spite of the fragile economic situation they are experiencing.

The international community is being called upon today to take a strong position that provides for several elements.

The first is to ensure secure access on the ground for international relief organizations in order to provide assistance to suffering civilians, including necessary food and medical support. Prohibiting such access is a crime and its perpetrators must be punished.

The second is to find a way to protect internally displaced persons and provide them with humanitarian assistance.

The third is to provide adequate logistical and material support to assist States hosting Syrian refugees.

The fourth is to urgently carry out an independent investigation into the brutal massacres and violations that have been continuously perpetrated against civilians. The most recent of those was the Darayya massacre, which raised the ire and condemnation of the international community.

The final element entails reporting the results of that an investigation so that the international

community can take the necessary measures against the perpetrators.

In view of the bonds of brotherhood and the duty of human solidarity, the Kingdom of Morocco, in accordance with the express instructions of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and in solidarity with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, has established a multipurpose field hospital in the Zaatari refugee camp, including the necessary logistical equipment to treat thousands of refugees. Through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Morocco has also supplied emergency food and medical assistance to refugees on Jordanian territory. The Kingdom of Morocco remains in contact with Syrian relief organizations, neighbouring countries and UNHCR and will continue to increase its contribution to the relief efforts.

Finally, as members of the Security Council it is our duty to seek to overcome existing divisions in order to achieve a comprehensive political solution to this prolonged crisis, while taking into account the main interests of the Syrian people in line with their aspirations to a better future and a guaranteed system of rotating power in which all segments of Syrian society may participate.

Mr. Hague (United Kingdom): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their briefings. I am grateful to our colleagues from Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq for their valuable insights. I thank you, Mr. President and the Government of France for initiating this meeting, which I believe should stir the conscience of the whole world. The need for humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people is urgent and it is growing. Over 200 people are currently dying every day. More than 1 in 10 Syrians is now in need of United Nations assistance. Close to 230,000 people have fled the country and, as we have heard, many more are waiting at its borders.

It is right that the Security Council show leadership in addressing the consequences of the conflict. But we cannot forget that we have so far failed in the Council in our responsibility to address the causes of the conflict. It is a welcome fact that, months ago, we adopted resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). But we have failed, on three occasions, to adopt a resolution that throws the full weight of the Council behind a plan to end the violence. We have not turned the desire for peace into a binding obligation to bring it about. We are now seeing the consequences of that failure. When calling for a resolution we warned that the Syrian Government was bent on violence and was not committed to a political process. We have seen whole cities laid waste and the cold-blooded slaughter of civilians. We warned of the risk of civil war in Syria and the creation of refugees on a vast scale. In August alone, 50,000 new refugees have sought sanctuary in neighbouring countries. We warned of the threat to international peace and security and the risk of extremism. there is now a danger of instability spreading to Lebanon and other neighbouring countries.

We condemn any attempt to use Syrian territory as a base for terrorist attacks in neighbouring countries and we deplore the sectarian violence that has happened in Lebanon. Lebanon has paid a price in blood higher than any other country, due to decades of coercion by the Al-Assad family. It must be allowed to pursue an independent, sovereign future free from the assassinations and interference of the past. We support the efforts of the Government of Prime Minister Mikati to maintain Lebanon's peace and stability. We hope that other United Nations Members will increase their support to the Lebanese Army, as we have done in the United Kingdom.

Like many colleagues here have already mentioned, I have seen the plight of Syrian refugees at first-hand. In Jordan with my colleague the Foreign Minister of Jordan, a few weeks ago I met innocent people who had played no part in the conflict, but whose families and livelihoods were being torn apart. I spoke to women refugees whose relatives had been killed and their homes destroyed, who had witnessed atrocities and who had walked for weeks to escape from the country. I saw the bewilderment and fear of children, who should be safely at home preparing for the new school year but who are, instead, refugees. And I saw the sheer scale of the effort to provide safe shelter, sanitation, warm food and medical attention to those desperate people.

I applaud the Governments and the people of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq for their generosity, in particular the kindness of many families who have taken refugees into their homes. I also pay tribute to all of the United Nations agencies for their work.

The Security Council's responsibility to act now is even greater than before. We will have to return to those fundamental responsibilities in the coming

weeks. Today I believe that we should take a stand on five issues.

First, we should call upon all countries to contribute funds to the United Nations relief effort and we should set a strong example of generosity ourselves. The United Kingdom is the second largest bilateral donor of international aid for the Syrian people, having already committed $41 million. Today we are announcing a further $4.5 million, to bring the total level of our humanitarian assistance to $46 million. That will include £2 million for life-saving medical aid for the worst affected areas in Syria and £1 million to provide clinical care and counselling to Syrian refugees in Jordan, in particular for women who have suffered the horrors of sexual violence.

At the General Assembly next month, the United Kingdom will set out our plans to use the presidency of the Group of Eight next year to help tackle sexual violence in conflict.

In June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) appealed for $193 million to respond to the crisis. Three months later that appeal for funding has not been met adequately, while the need for it has grown. That should be a matter of shame. The conflict has worsened. If the bombardment of cities such as Aleppo continues, we could see a dramatic increase in the number of refugees.

I call on all nations to make the contributions needed to save innocent lives in Syria and to support the neighbours of Syria. I urge citizens around the world to ask their Governments to do what they can do to help. To that end, the United Kingdom proposes a meeting of development ministers with United Nations agencies to encourage increased donations. We urge all members of the Security Council to call on all parties in Syria to allow the United Nations and humanitarian agencies full access to areas of need inside Syria. We condemn the disturbing reports that medical stocks, humanitarian personnel and aid centres in Syria are being deliberately targeted. We hope the Syrian Government will hear a clear message from the Security Council today that it must meet its humanitarian obligations.

Secondly, the Council should express its commitment to supporting justice and accountability for the Syrian people. The Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry has reported human rights violations on an appalling scale by the Syrian Government and its shabiha militia, as well as abuses by some armed groups. The Government of the United Kingdom strongly believes that the Commission's mandate should be extended so it can continue its vital work, and that the Security Council must be ready to act on its findings. We also support the Swiss Government's initiative to build momentum and support for a referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, and urge others to join those efforts. Those responsible for crimes in Syria should be left in no doubt that they will be held accountable.

Thirdly, we must face up to the need to prepare support for Syria as it emerges from conflict. The international community must plan now if we are to ensure rapid support for a future Syrian Government. This is necessary in order to minimize the risks to regional and international security, to protect civilians inside Syria and to lay the foundations for longer-term stability. A new Syrian Government will face many challenges, from reforming the security and justice sectors and ensuring public safety to restoring health and education services. That cannot be left to chance. The United Kingdom will continue to work closely with the Syrian political opposition, encouraging them to develop their vision for a stable, democratic Syria where all communities are respected and secure.

Fourthly, the people of Syria live in the shadow of the threat of the Syrian regime's stock of chemical and biological weapons. All Security Council members should demand that Syria adhere to its obligations to secure and account for those stocks, and call on the Secretary-General to ensure that the investigation mechanism into allegations of the use of chemical and biological weapons can be readily deployed.

Fifthly, the best way forward in Syria remains a Syrian-led political transition, on the basis of the plan set out by Kofi Annan and endorsed by the Geneva Action Group, including members of the Security Council. I thank Kofi Annan for all his tireless work. I welcome the new Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the Arab League to his role and offer him the full support of the United Kingdom as he takes this work forward.

The implementation of a transition plan should now be required by the Security Council through the adoption of a resolution, with clear consequences for a failure to implement the terms of previous resolutions. If it is not, the scene is set for months of greater bloodshed, greater suffering and greater danger to international peace and security. Since the Council has not yet decided to do

everything it can to end the violence, today we must at least do what we can to mitigate its effects. That is our focus today; but our primary aim must be the determined and united effort to end the conflict that this crisis demands and that the people of Syria deserve.

Ms. Holguín Cuéllar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Colombia, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on France's presidency of the Security Council this month, as well as on your initiative in convening this important meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria and in inviting Syria's neighbours to participate.

I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their briefings and clear explanations of the situation of refugees in Syria. I would also like to thank the Ministers from Syria's neighbours Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Jordan for their presence here and for their support to Syrian citizens in need of protection. Let me say that their first-hand testimony is extremely worrying.

Syria's humanitarian situation cannot be settled without a political solution. For long and painful months the international community has witnessed a deepening crisis and worsening humanitarian situation in Syria. Despite the efforts of the international community, it has been impossible to end the conflict. Unfortunately, we in the Security Council have been unable to do anything to halt the crisis. We have failed.

The impact of the conflict on the civilian population is enormous. According to reports, more than 2.5 million people have been affected, the majority of them internal displaced persons, as well as almost 250,000 registered as refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Beyond the thousands of displaced people and refugees, the widespread violence also hurts the families who have lost their loved ones. The destruction done by the bullets and attacks to homes and the national infrastructure, as well as to economic activity, will affect Syria's recovery in both the short and long term. Unfortunately, what has been destroyed in just a few months will take years to restore.

Colombia joins the international community in calling on all the parties to respect their obligations as laid down in international humanitarian law. While the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians resides with the Syrian authorities, all the parties involved must abide by international humanitarian law, which sets out clear rules for that protection. We deplore the fact that neither party has accepted the proposals for a peaceful solution and that both have rejected a ceasefire and a path leading to political dialogue. We reaffirm our call for an end to all attacks and for efforts to seek a political solution that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of Syrian society. We hope that the Syrian people can find an effective alternative that will allow negotiations to start with the help of the international community. In the process of reaching a political solution, we must focus on the civilian population and on the young people and women and men who are the victims of this war.

We acknowledge once again the mediation efforts of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. We hope that Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, recently appointed as Joint Special Envoy, will be able to bring the parties together so that they can take the path of dialogue. However, we must bear in mind that for Mr. Brahimi's mandate to succeed it is essential that the parties be genuinely committed and that we can guarantee the unified and coherent support of the international community, particularly the Security Council. We welcome the Secretary-General's decision to maintain an efficient and flexible United Nations presence in Syria, designed to support the Organization's efforts and any progress that may be achieved between the parties towards a negotiated political settlement.

In a region crucial to international peace and security, we must work together to prevent any escalation of the conflict from exacerbating existing tensions in an already complex environment. Resorting to violence is not the right way to solve the Syrian crisis. We reiterate that is up to the Syrians to take the lead in the peace and reconciliation process. The international community should promote a dialogue conducive to a political solution in a coordinated and unified manner.

In the short term, the urgent task is to ease the humanitarian crisis. We must strictly enforce international humanitarian law and respect for the human rights of the Syrian people. We welcome the steps taken by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in seeking ways to speedily expand relief efforts and reduce the suffering of civilians caught in the crossfire. Attention should be given to the most pressing needs of those affected, particularly the most vulnerable, who are in urgent need of basic housing, food, health, water and sanitation.

As we have heard, the worsening of the crisis, and particularly of the humanitarian situation, is also having a negative effect on those neighbouring countries that have made huge efforts to meet the needs of the thousands of Syrians who have sought refuge in their territories. Those countries, as well as the humanitarian agencies, need more international cooperation to ensure that they are able to assist the growing number of refugees.

Colombia reaffirms its commitment to promoting a political solution to the Syrian crisis and believes that the six-point plan proposed in resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) represents a consensus on the part of the international community as to how to address the situation. Its implementation would help to lay the foundations for a political solution. To that end, we must persist in bringing together the positions of the various players involved in order to consolidate a common strategy under Syrian leadership that solves the most pressing problems with long-term proposals and commitments.

Mr. Ohin (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me commend the French Government for the initiative to organize this meeting, which is focused on the humanitarian situation in Syria and its serious repercussions for neighbouring countries. I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Elliason and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their very detailed briefings on the subject. I also commend the presence of the Ministers from Syria's neighbouring countries of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, as well as the other heads of delegations attending this meeting.

The Syrian crisis, which has already lasted for more than 18 months, is now in a complete stalemate with regard to a peaceful settlement. The inability of the Security Council so far to speak with one voice to address this crisis is deeply regrettable. Unfortunately, the various initiatives undertaken outside the Security Council have not succeeded in bringing about a positive solution to the conflict, undoubtedly they have often been conflicting. Moreover, the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, was seen as the best way to end the crisis, particularly in that it had been agreed to by the parties involved.

Given the ongoing violations of that plan and the surge in fighting with the use of heavy artillery and sophisticated weapons, typical of a conventional war and an internal armed conflict with serious international implications, the Joint Special Envoy decided to announce his resignation. My country, which regretted that resignation, has nevertheless welcomed the quick appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Envoy. I would like to reaffirm here our full support for Mr. Brahimi and to wish him every success as he carries out his mandate.

Syria has now entered what one would call a civil war in which the people pay a heavy price. The clashes taking place in the urban areas, the number of dead, totalling in the dozens per day and already surpassing 25,000, and the pointless destruction of property have increased the number of displaced persons within the country as well as the number of refugees seeking safe haven in neighbouring countries. Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon in particular are accommodating a huge number of refugees, currently estimated to exceed 250,000, including women and children who have fled massacres, summary executions and all manner of abductions and violations of human rights. That situation is a genuine humanitarian disaster, both in Syria and in the host countries. From all standpoints, the situation is worsening as the fighting intensifies and the martyrdom of the Syrian people is heightened.

In that regard, Togo would like to thank the host countries for the untold sacrifice that they are undertaking to protect and come to the assistance of the thousands of refugees arriving in their countries in dire need, some of them sick or wounded. Hosting refugees is always a heavy burden, both for the host State and for the humanitarian organizations that work to provide assistance. The host countries cannot bear that heavy burden alone, and the full cost cannot be assessed without factoring in the insecurity that it leads to.

My country therefore calls upon the entire international community to continue to remain engaged with regard to the tragedy currently taking place in Syria by providing increased material and financial assistance to meet the needs of Syrian refugees and displaced persons. I would like to take the opportunity afforded by this meeting to commend the efforts undertaken to date by States, United Nations system entities and humanitarian agencies, as well as their staff, who, within Syria and in the refugee camps, are working to provide the relief and assistance to the populations that their status requires.

Beyond the words of support and the efforts undertaken on the ground to help refugees and displaced persons, we need to define strategies to reorganize and support humanitarian action. That is the goal of this meeting, since all of the other initiatives to date with regard to a peaceful settlement of the conflict have failed.

From the viewpoint of my country, the strategies to be established need to include the adoption of national or regional measures to provide relief to displaced Syrians, both within the country and outside as refugees. At the same time, we need to firmly hold parties on all sides accountable for their responsibilities in terms of complying with the relevant international legal instruments of humanitarian law and international human rights law. Proven violations of that responsibility to protect, which is incumbent upon all parties, must be considered within the context of the fight against impunity and should lead to holding those responsible accountable for their actions before national or international courts.

The Security Council must send a strong and unequivocal message to all parties in that regard, for there can be no doubt that the forces who are fighting in Syria are continuing to commit serious violations of international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law. The report issued in February (A/HRC/19/69) by the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, mandated by the Human Rights Council, indicates that those violations are committed both by the governmental forces and by the anti-Government armed groups. Several months after the publication of the report, and following months of violations and acts that shock the conscious of humankind, we must conclude that such acts have worsened owing to the increasing intensity of the fighting and the use of military aircraft, the use of terrorist attacks and the perpetration of widespread massacres, with men, women and children indiscriminately being the victims.

That litany of acts, which constitute violations of human rights, includes impediments to providing humanitarian assistance. My country calls on all parties to avoid such acts and commit to opening humanitarian passageways so that assistance can be brought to the populations that direly need it. Humanitarian workers must also be protected to be able to carry out that dangerous mission. In that regard, we reaffirm that the provision of humanitarian assistance must take place within the context of respect for the sovereignty of Syria itself and respect for the neighbouring countries that are absorbing the continuous influx of refugees.

The Syrian conflict cannot avoid being subject to the conventional rules of conflict resolution. Its settlement will necessarily entail dialogue, regardless of whether one party is a winner or a loser. Syria will need all of its daughters and sons to rebuild. Syrians will have to live with the outcome of the tragedy that they are currently experiencing; but dialogue and reconciliation cannot be put off for much longer. That dialogue needs to begin now, and to do that the fighting must stop.

The message that the Security Council has sent since the very beginning of the crisis, although it has not been successful in getting it implemented on the ground, is still relevant. The fighting needs to stop to provide an opportunity for diplomacy to convince all of Syria's community, political, ethnic and religious components to engage in dialogue in order to bring about a restoration of peace in their country.

This notion of dialogue was supported by the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which continues to believe that the only possible way to put an end to the violence is an inclusive dialogue that brings about a negotiated settlement to effectively ensure respect for human rights for the entire population of the country.

The United Nations must remain engaged in bringing about a political settlement to the crisis, and Mr. Brahimi will have the challenging responsibility of meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The tireless support of the international community, and specifically of the Council, is necessary to ensure that his mission is successful. We all agree that we need to provide relief to the refugees, but we are also all aware that the solution to this crisis is a political one. Therefore, we all know what remains to be done to achieve a lasting solution.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): Thank you, Foreign Minister Fabius, for convening this important meeting.

We gather at a sombre hour, less than a week after some of the bloodiest days since the Syrian regime began its crackdown almost 18 months ago. The United States is outraged by the summary executions and shelling that killed hundreds of Syrians in Darayya late last week. The reports of aerial attacks on hospitals, bakeries and breadlines in Aleppo recall some of the

worst atrocities of prior conflicts. The international community has long pledged to never again allow such crimes. Yet, for a year and a half, the Syrian regime has waged a vicious, unrelenting campaign of terror and bloodshed against its own suffering people. Bashar Al-Assad and those who still stand by him are now responsible for the deaths of more than 20,000 Syrians and the wounding of tens of thousands more. They have forced hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee for their lives.

Despite the appalling environment on the ground and the clear obstruction by the Syrian Government, we are working with others to counter the cruelty of Bashar Al-Assad and his clique. The United Nations, international organizations, the United States, many countries around the world and Syrian and other humanitarian organizations are rushing vital aid to the hundreds of thousands of civilians in urgent need. The United Nations reports that up to 2.5 million Syrians now need assistance. We commend the humanitarian workers, who are risking their lives to save others, and we grieve for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. All parties, especially the Syrian Government, must allow safe, full and unfettered access for humanitarian workers so they can save lives that today hang in the balance.

The United States strongly supports the full and immediate implementation of the Syria humanitarian response plan, which was agreed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Government of Syria. Only half of the $180 million needed to address prior humanitarian needs in Syria has been provided. The revised United Nations Syria regional response plan, which assists neighbouring countries hosting refugees, is underfunded as well.

My Government is pursuing every avenue to provide humanitarian relief to those affected by the violence in Syria. This year, the United States has already provided nearly $82 million to the United Nations and other relief agencies for the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Our aid has fed the hungry and bound up the wounds of as many of Al-Assad's victims as we can reach. We are helping protect internally displaced people and refugees, working to save children from malnutrition and disease and helping to ensure adequate water, sanitation and hygiene. Our assistance is also enabling humanitarian coordination and logis ics support to relief agencies.

We are deeply grateful to fellow Member States that also have made important donations. We urge all Members to increase their contributions to meet the shortfalls and to coordinate closely with the United Nations to avoid creating parallel humanitarian response systems. We appreciate especially the generosity of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and other countries that have opened their borders to civilians fleeing violence and persecution. We stand ready to continue to provide support as needed. We call on all concerned to facilitate safe passage for those seeking to flee. The United States is deeply troubled by the spillover of Syria's violence into neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon, where the Lebanese Government and security forces are working to manage outbreaks of violence.

But this is not, at its root, a humanitarian crisis. It is a political crisis caused by the cruelty and callousness of the Al-Assad regime. No amount of humanitarian assistance will end the bloodshed and suffering. That day will come only once Al-Assad has departed and a peaceful, Syrian-led transition to democracy has begun. This remains our goal and should be the goal of all nations of goodwill. We welcome the appointment of Joint Special Envoy Brahimi and fully support his efforts to end the violence and pave the way for a political transition.

In parallel, the United States and our partners will continue to work with the Syrian opposition and to engage all elements of society to help the Syrian people achieve a Government that represents all of its citizens, promotes their human rights, respects the rule of law and responds to its people's aspirations. We are proud to help train civil society activists and to provide Syrians with equipment that lets them communicate securely with one another, reach out to the outside world and document the regime's atrocities. We encourage the opposition's efforts to unite the population behind a common transition plan that offers a viable and safe future for all Syrians. We will continue to expand and intensify those efforts, and we will not rest until the Syrian people are free to realize their aspirations to govern themselves and live without fear.

Even as the conflict rages, we condemn in the strongest terms unlawful killings by any side. We cannot and will not turn away from atrocities and systematic violations of international law. Those responsible for massacres of civilians will be held accountable. We welcome pledges by Free Syrian Army leaders that forbid their soldiers from harming civilians, mistreating prisoners or killing captured combatants. We will watch to see that those promises

are implemented. We also reiterate our demand that the Syrian Government refrain from using or transferring any chemical or biological weapons. It is incumbent upon the Syrian Government to ensure the safety and security of all such weapons and stockpiles.

We have heard volumes today about the suffering of the innocent and the cruelty of the guilty. My country was founded on the belief that Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. The Al-Assad regime has manifestly lost whatever consent, if any, it ever had. The question is not whether it will fall; the question is when, and at what price.

The primary responsibility for ending the carnage rests with Al-Assad and the clique around him. But the rest of the international community, especially our fellow Council members, has responsibilities of their own. Unfortunately, a few members of the Council continue to prevent this body from responding effectively. That is reprehensible. Yet even at this tragically late hour, things do not have to remain as they are. The Syrian people fully understand which countries have rallied to their legitimate cause and which countries have protected a doomed and desperate regime. The United States will remain committed to pursuing a wiser course, one that limits the harm to regional security, staves off the risk of full-scale civil strife and produces a new, responsible Syrian Government that will defend and respect all of its citizens. Indeed, one day not far away, Al-Assad will lose his bloody grip on the Syrian people. Then the Council will have to step up to help the Syrian people heal the wounds of war and rebuild their battered country. When that day comes, the Syrian people — and the world — will remember who was on the wrong side of history and who was on the side of the Syrian people.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): Allow me to begin by thanking the French presidency for convening this important meeting under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East", to discuss the humanitarian consequences of the Syrian crisis. We are also grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their briefings. I would also like to welcome the participation of the various Ministers at the Council's meeting today.

Azerbaijan remains deeply concerned about the escalation of violence and the worsening socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Syria. Over the period from the beginning of the crisis to now, sporadic incidents have evolved into more brutal clashes with increased organizational and military capabilities, including the use of excessive force and indiscriminate attacks on civilians. As a result, thousands have lost their lives in the spiral of violence, and the number of civilians killed grows daily. It is important that all human rights violations and abuses be thoroughly investigated and that perpetrators be held accountable for their crimes. We once again reiterate our appeal to all parties to cease all acts of violence immediately and to implement fully their commitments under international law and relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

As the number of displaced people within Syria and of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries grows, and as the security and humanitarian situation rapidly deteriorates, the threat of the destabilization of the whole region is particularly alarming. We commend the Governments of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey — the countries affected by repercussions of the crisis — for the relief and protection that they are providing to Syrian refugees.

The concerns of, and appeals by, neighbouring countries about the impact of the continuation and further escalation of the crisis should be taken seriously. Those countries must be given appropriate assistance and support to address the political, security and humanitarian challenges that they are facing. In that context, it is of paramount importance that all appropriate practical measures be taken to ensure that the crisis in Syria not be used as a pretext for organizing, instigating, facilitating or encouraging terrorist and separatist activity against other States, in particular those surrounding Syria. At the same time, careful consideration should be given to reports on the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis on other regions.

About 2.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the conflict in Syria. We appreciate the efforts undertaken so far by international humanitarian organizations and relief agencies on the ground to assist people affected by the conflict. The scale of the humanitarian crisis requires opening greater humanitarian access and widening the scope of organizations with which the United Nations and others can interact to deliver relief to those in need, in accordance with humanitarian principles and international law. A more prompt and sizable response to the United Nations humanitarian appeal for Syria is critical. It is an absolute necessity to support those requiring assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.

Together with the Geneva communiqué of the Action Group, the relevant resolutions constitute a solid basis guiding efforts towards a political settlement, involving an inclusive and Syrian-led political process whose aim is to address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people. It is important that obligations with respect to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Syria and all other States in the region be fully observed and respected.

The important work that Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan undertook must continue. We welcome newly appointed Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and we wish him every success in fulfilling the very important and crucial task of facilitating a peaceful solution. The full cooperation of all sides in Syria with the Special Representative and the international community's support for him are necessary to achieve a long-awaited breakthrough in ending the violence and bringing peace and stability to Syria and the entire region. It is clear that all national stakeholders should demonstrate determination to solve the crisis by peaceful means rather than militarily.

Against that background, it is essential that the Security Council speak with one voice, to ensure that the parties comply with their commitments and cooperate with the Joint Special Envoy responsibly and in good faith. Maintaining the United Nations presence on the ground is another prerequisite for supporting the Secretary-General's good offices, as well as for sustaining international oversight and securing the flow of independent and impartial on-site information. We hope that collective efforts will finally yield results in bringing about a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis and in putting an end to the human suffering.

Lastly, I should like to take the opportunity afforded by the discussion on this agenda item to express our profound concern about the Middle East peace process, which has been at a standstill with no substantive progress towards resuming direct talks between the parties. It is obvious that a solution to that problem is essential to achieving durable peace, stability and security in the entire region, and that respect for international law should be an absolute priority to that end. In assuming its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council must react adequately in order to put an end to illegal practices and policies and ensure that international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms are observed and respected.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome France's initiative in convening today's meeting. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for the assessments he provided. Mr. Guterres also shared critical information with us. We have paid particular attention to the statements made by the Ministers representing Syria's neighbouring countries.

The trends in the developing humanitarian situation in Syria cannot but arouse deep concern. There is an increase in the number of civilian victims and an increase in refugees, who now number more than 200,000. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has surpassed 1 million, while 2.5 million Syrians require assistance. The situation is even more dramatic given that there are more than 1.5 million refugees from other countries in Syria. The majority of the Syrian population has experienced the consequences of the chaos.

Both belligerent parties bear responsibility for the plight of common citizens. We call upon the Syrian leadership and leaders of the opposition, including the armed opposition, to prevent a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

We note the efforts of the Government of Syria aimed at providing assistance to those suffering. It is important that a plan has been agreed upon for a humanitarian response. In accordance with it, international humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations working with local authorities and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent are carrying out humanitarian activities in Syria. The bulk of humanitarian assistance today is going to the refugee camps in Syria's neighbouring countries, and they truly need that assistance. However, the population living within Syrian territory clearly lacks access to the humanitarian assistance that is being provided through various channels. There is an urgent need to earmark additional resources to assist all affected Syrians, including IDPs.

Russia is actively providing Syria with humanitarian assistance, both bilaterally and through international organizations. We have provided targeted donor contributions in the millions of dollars to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and direct humanitarian assistance has also been delivered.

We welcome the activities of the international entities, above all OCHA, in providing international humanitarian assistance to suffering Syrians. Humanitarian organizations and agencies must have access to the sites in neighbouring countries where there are Syrian refugees, in order to properly assess the situation and provide appropriate assistance. We underscore the importance of implementing the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees regional plan to assist refugees.

The humanitarian situation in Syria has been negatively impacted by unilateral economic sanctions and restrictions imposed by individual countries and regional associations. We fundamentally oppose such practices. The sanctions imposed in circumvention of the Security Council have nothing in common with genuine efforts to assist in settling the Syrian crisis. They simply complicate the life of common citizens and deny them the opportunity to meet their basic needs and fully enjoy basic human rights. That is not only our conclusion, but also the conclusion of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. We call upon the nations that have imposed sanctions against Syria to immediately lift them.

We cannot accept the efforts of individual States to use pseudo-humanitarian arguments to justify their financial, material, technical or logistical support to illegal armed groups. When implementing humanitarian activities, it is critical to continue to fully comply with the principles of neutrality and impartiality. Allow me to put this directly: not all of the ideas voiced here are in keeping with those criteria. In general, humanitarian assistance must be carried out strictly within the framework of international law.

It is quite clear that the primary cause of the plight of the Syrian people is the ongoing hostilities. Therefore, the core challenge, at this point in time, is the ceasefire. All belligerents must halt their activities and cease all armed confrontation and move their conflict into the political realm. Any other approach will lead only to a worsening of the crisis, including the humanitarian crisis.

Today, not only has there been no decline in the level of violence in Syria but it has continued to worsen. We regret that, owing to the positions of a number of Security Council members, we were unable to extend the mandate of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, which played a certain deterrent role in the crisis.

The Office of the Joint Special Envoy in Damascus, which is being established, must quickly begin its active work on the ground, which we hope will help the Syrians to end the vicious cycle of violence. One of the near-term practical jobs of the Office, as we see it, is to assist in carrying out a careful, impartial inquiry into all of the circumstances related to the latest tragic events and acts of violence against civilians.

The international community cannot remain aloof to the attempts of extremist elements and terrorists to further destabilize the situation in Syria, in particular the repressive acts against ethnic and religious minorities.

We anticipate that today's meeting will facilitate a strengthening of the common denominator in our positions, in the interest of coordinated leverage on the conflicting parties so as to encourage them to immediately end the bloodshed and make it possible to address the pressing humanitarian problems of the Syrian people, particularly since we already have a consensus basis in that context in the form of the relevant Security Council resolutions, Mr. Annan's plan and the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria.

That is the basis for Russia's decision to continue its persistent efforts in dealing with the Syrian Government and with the opposition groups. We call upon other responsible members of the international community to do the same.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Brahimi as Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria and will provide him with assistance towards a political settlement in Syria along with our firm, principled support.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): South Africa expresses its appreciation to the delegation of France for organizing this timely meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Today's meeting provides us yet another opportunity to make an honest and frank assessment of the situation in general and the increasing humanitarian crisis in particular.

We thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his statement today. We also thank United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for his statement. Both of them painted a rather gloomy humanitarian picture for both Syria and the affected neighbouring countries. We also thank the

Ministers of Syria's immediate neighbours — Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon — for their statements. It will also be important to later hear directly from the Syrian Permanent Representative about the unfolding humanitarian situation in his country.

South Africa is on record as condemning the ongoing violence in Syria and conveys its heartfelt condolences to the families of all of those who have lost their lives as a result of the Syrian crisis.

While today's meeting is focused on the humanitarian situation, it is essential that we remain fully engaged in pursuing a sustainable political solution in Syria. Divisions within the Council have rendered it irrelevant and unable to play a constructive role in fulfilling its Charter-mandated responsibilities to promote peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is important that the Council approach this crisis in a balanced manner by calling on and applying pressure on all sides to bring an end to the violence, establish a ceasefire and comply with their respective obligations under the six-point plan and the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria.

It is essential that a credible political process be supported by a united, cohesive international effort towards a Syrian-led negotiated political transition aimed at establishing a democratic pluralistic society that meets the legitimate aspirations of all of the Syrian people. We therefore thank Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan for his outstanding leadership and commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Syrian crisis. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Brahimi as the new Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, and we express confidence in his abilities and leadership. I assure him of South Africa's full support.

We also wish to commend the role played by the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria, albeit for a limited period, serving as the Organization's eyes and ears on the ground and operating under very difficult circumstances. The unending violence and the intransigence of the parties have made it impossible to continue that Mission.

Despite the setback, we are confident that the Secretary-General's proposed liaison office will be in a position to make an assessment of the situation and identify windows of opportunity that could be exploited to launch a political process. We appeal to the parties to cooperate with the Joint Special Envoy and the United Nations liaison office with a view to urgently kick-starting a credible Syrian-led and owned political dialogue.

Needless to say, the collapse of Syria will certainly adversely affect regional stability in the Middle East, and could even spark a dangerous and undesirable struggle for regional hegemony. Any tilting of the proverbial political scales in favour of one country or grouping of countries in the Middle East will certainly unleash a geopolitical crisis with the potential to further destabilize an already unstable and fragile region. We are already seeing the impact of the Syrian crisis on neighbouring countries, particularly Lebanon.

South Africa reiterates that the situation in Syria cannot be solved by military means or by helping one side, militarily or otherwise, to defeat the other. Perhaps it is appropriate, given the allegations being made that some are arming the opposition, to ask whether arming the opposition in Syria is not indirect military intervention. We contend that a military approach may be convenient in the short term, but it will surely expose the country's fault lines and result in unending civil strife, as we have witnessed in other situations where solutions of this nature were pursued without taking internal political dynamics and contexts into account.

We hope that humanitarian and protection-of-civilians pretexts will not be used to effect regime change in Syria, at least not in the name of the Security Council. We recall that the United Nations Charter states that

> "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."

It is evident, by any measure, that the humanitarian situation in Syria is appalling, the more so because the conflict continues unabated, with the parties seemingly determined to defeat each other militarily with no consideration for the resulting human suffering. With more than 2.5 million people in need, including about 1.2 million displaced, the situation is indeed dire, and also affects the most vulnerable, that is, women and children.

South Africa appreciates the work of the United Nations, through such relief programmes as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the United

Nations Population Fund, and their efforts to alleviate the humanitarian situation, which is compounded by, among other things, shortages of the basic amenities of life, as well as internal and international displacement. We also want to thank other humanitarian relief agencies, such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the numerous national and international non-governmental organizations whose workers have risked their lives and expended significant resources to help the Syrian people.

We have heard numerous concerns about the humanitarian situation in Syria but have seen very little action aimed at providing the requisite resources for humanitarian relief. In that regard, we applaud the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos for visiting Syria and engaging with the Syrian authorities on the humanitarian situation. The cooperation of the Syrian authorities and the opposition in facilitating humanitarian access should also be acknowledged and encouraged.

The situation of refugees is of equal concern. As the conflict continues, the number of people fleeing and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries is rising dramatically. What is worrying about this is that these people are fleeing to countries that already have their own challenges. Even more worrying is the fact that while Syrians are fleeing their country, Syria itself is host to large refugee communities from Somalia, Iraq, the Sudan and Afghanistan, as well as more than 500,000 Palestinians. It is not surprising that those displaced people are concerned about the future, as they are certainly in a precarious situation, with nowhere to go but back home, which they fled for similar reasons.

There can be no doubt that the refugee situation is putting increasing strain on the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, which are hosting refugees. We must applaud them for providing shelter and other help to those desperate people. We should also thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East and other humanitarian relief agencies for helping to ease the plight of Syrian refugees. Given the escalating humanitarian crisis in Syria and the apparent lack of funds, we appeal to the international community, including the countries in the wider Middle East region, to respond to the humanitarian appeal by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Syria regional response plan.

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates that all Syrian parties must be responsible for ending the violence immediately and commit to finding peace. As for the Council, it is now crucial and ever more urgent that we set aside the differences between us that are predicated on narrow nationalistic interests and save Syria and the region from total collapse. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, should work in a spirit of unity to find a solution to the situation in Syria before it is too late.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and High Commissioner Guterres for their briefings. I would also like to thank the French presidency for its initiative in calling for today's meeting, which comes at a very important moment.

The Syrian people are in urgent need of our support. We have heard today that the humanitarian situation is dramatic and worsening by the day. We are grateful to the Governments and people of Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq and commend them for the crucial support they have provided to Syrian families fleeing the brutal violence of the Al-Assad regime and its militias.

My Government, as part of the international effort, is providing substantial financial support for relief efforts undertaken by United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, both within Syria and in neighbouring States. I assure the Council that we will continue to do so. It is essential that humanitarian access inside Syria be improved in order to help the people in need. We therefore call on all parties to facilitate humanitarian access in all parts of Syria.

The humanitarian situation will not improve unless the Syrian people can live free from fear. The Al-Assad regime's continuing attacks on civilians and massive human rights violations must stop. The use of heavy weapons, helicopter gunships and fighter planes shows the extreme brutality that Damascus employs against the Syrian people. Today's meeting also comes only a few days after reports of yet another massacre committed by the regime and its militias against civilians, including women and children.

Accountability for such crimes must be ensured. The independent commission of inquiry has made important findings and compiled a list of those deemed responsible. That provides a solid base for possible follow-up action, including by the International Criminal Court. We also call on the opposition to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians. More leadership and dedication is required. The publication of a code of conduct for the Free Syrian Army is a first step in the right direction. Humanitarian law applies to all sides.

My Government will continue to work towards a political solution to the crisis. That includes a political transition aimed at achieving a democratic and tolerant Syria that embraces all Syrians and assures their human rights, irrespective of origin or religion. The United Nations should continue to play a central role in supporting the Syrian people in their quest for a political settlement and embarking upon a democratic transition. The same is true for the Arab League, which has played an active and constructive role from the start. I would like to assure the Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi of Germany's full support for his challenging new task.

We are also engaging closely with the opposition, both bilaterally and within the Friends of Syria Group, to prepare the ground for a post-Al-Assad Syria. It is in all our interests to avoid a total breakdown in Syria, which would also pose a serious threat to regional stability. Our position is clear: there can be no future for President Al-Assad in a new Syria. We call on him to step aside to avoid further bloodshed.

The stocks of chemical weapons in Syria pose a serious threat. The use of chemical weapons would be a disastrous escalation of the situation, with unpredictable consequences for Syria and the entire region. We urge Syria to strictly abide by its obligation under international law not to use chemical weapons under any circumstances. We also call upon Syria to guarantee the secure and safe storage of those weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Vinay Kumar (India): At the outset, let me thank the Deputy Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Ministers from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Colombia, France, Morocco, Togo and the United Kingdom for their participation in today's meeting and for their statements.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, in March 2011, the situation has steadily deteriorated. More than 2.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, more than 1 million are internally displaced and more than 200,000 are refugees. The continuing military operations by all sides have prevented the timely and adequate delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need. Efforts by the international community have so far failed to address the crisis, which is increasingly affecting the region as a whole.

It is unfortunate that neither side to the Syrian conflict has implemented its obligations under the six-point plan, which was endorsed by resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). The conflict has become increasingly more militarized and has been exploited by well-known terrorist groups. A number of terrorist acts have been committed against State institutions and public infrastructure. There have been gross violations of human rights by all sides. Unfortunately, the Syrian parties, instead of seriously commencing a Syrian-led political process, have pursued a military approach to realize their objectives.

We strongly condemn all violence and violations of human rights irrespective of who their perpetrators are. We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the terrorist acts that have been and continue to be committed in Syria. We call upon all parties, Syrian as well as foreign, to dissociate themselves from terrorist groups and ensure that no space or justification is provided for terrorist acts.

Under the prevailing circumstances in Syria, there is an urgent need for the international community to close ranks and send a united message to the Syrian parties to renounce their military approach and resolve the crisis through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process. There is no other way to bring about a sustained cessation of violence in all its forms by all parties. That is also the only way to end human rights violations and create an atmosphere conducive to the safe and unhindered delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance. Any further militarization of the conflict will not only make it more difficult to reach a political solution, but also exacerbate the humanitarian situation. In that connection, any militarization of the humanitarian situation will worsen the security situation and the humanitarian conditions for millions of Syrians; it must therefore be avoided.

In order to assist the Syrian parties, change their course and address the crisis through political dialogue, it is important that all parties, inside and outside Syria, fully abide by their obligations under resolutions 2042

(2012) and 2043 (2012). The parties must be prevailed upon to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the final communiqué issued on 30 June in Geneva.

India firmly believes that it is critical for the United Nations to remain strongly engaged with the Syrian parties and other actors in the search for a way forward. Unilateral action of any kind will not resolve the crisis. It will only exacerbate the problem and cause greater instability and violence, even beyond Syria's borders. We also believe that the leadership of Syria is for Syrians to decide through a democratic process. The task of the international community, anchored in the United Nations, is to assist the Syrian parties in that process.

India has consistently called for and supported international efforts to assist the Syrian parties in resolving the crisis and bringing about peace through dialogue and political processes. Accordingly, we strongly supported the efforts of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. We now welcome the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the new Special Envoy and urge all sides, Syrian and foreign, to cooperate with him in good faith so that the Syrian crisis can be resolved without any further bloodshed.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing and presiding over this meeting, which draws our attention to the dramatic humanitarian situation in Syria. We regret the absence of our own Minister for Foreign Affairs, who had a prior commitment and is on an official mission. We thank the Ministers of Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, the United Kingdom, Morocco, Colombia and Togo for their presence here. We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their briefings.

It is difficult to separate the humanitarian situation from the political situation in Syria, an issue which has been on our agenda for almost a year and which led to the adoption of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and to certain well-known subsequent developments. The internal conflict has given rise to a humanitarian crisis and that crisis is laying the groundwork for a worsening of the conflict. The most recent report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/19/69) and the recent attacks in Damascus and Aleppo show that there has been an increase in acts of violence in the country. The battles being waged in cities, with little respect for civilians, including through the use of heavy weaponry, tanks, helicopters and airplanes, must end. It has been called easy, but we all know how difficult it has been to persuade the parties to the conflict to lay down their weapons.

When that does not happen, we usually appeal, not only to the Government but also to the armed opposition to respect the human rights of the civilian population and to avoid actions that could later be classified as war crimes, including murder, extrajudicial execution and torture. The idea of creating buffer zones within Syrian territory is also being discussed. That entails some obviously appealing aspects, but also raises legal and practical questions that have not been considered by the Council.

While this debate is being held, the number of Syrian refugees is increasing every day. In that regard, the efforts that countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan have undertaken to receive those people are commendable. The efforts undertaken by the United Nations, especially by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to meet the most immediate needs of the affected population, above all the internally displaced persons, is also commendable and must be emphasized. Humanitarian staff have worked heroically under difficult and dangerous circumstances, often facing the ill will of the authorities and now facing a lack of funds. That situation is compounded by the increase in the number of victims of violence, most of them women and children.

Therefore, while respecting the norms of international humanitarian law, the Syrian Government must allow its population access to humanitarian assistance. We cannot allow those people to go without timely access to medical care, assistance, water and food. That is also why we appeal to the international community to continue to provide humanitarian assistance in support to the affected population.

In conclusion, we think that a greater outpouring of violence in Syria can still be prevented. In our view, we cannot allow more acts of violence or violations of human rights to be committed by any of the parties, much less for such acts to continue with impunity while increasing in magnitude and brutality. As members of the international community, it is our obligation to promote truth, transparency and the responsibility of all those responsible for those violations. Above all, we

must undertake the greatest possible efforts to prevent further atrocities from being committed. In that regard, we would like to publicly thank Kofi Annan for his devoted service, and we welcome Lakhdar Brahimi, to whom we extend our full support.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): We thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their briefings, and we also thank France for convening today's debate. We are also grateful to all the Ministers who have joined us this afternoon.

The large number of people displaced from their homes and those who have taken refuge in neighbouring countries serves to indicate how the continued crisis in Syria is exacting a heavy toll on the civilian population. We commend the efforts by the neighbouring countries, including Turkey, Jordon, Iraq and Lebanon, in providing humanitarian assistance and shelter to the people displaced. Having been host to millions of Afghan refugees for decades, Pakistan is no stranger to the magnitude of the responsibility that such situations entail. The need for wholehearted support by the international community is clear.

The initial joint needs assessment carried out by the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Syrian Government kindled optimism that things might start moving in the right direction. However, subsequent developments have dashed all such hopes. We urge all parties to the conflict to ensure the availability of humanitarian relief, particularly to those in urgent need.

The current humanitarian crisis in Syria cannot be addressed in isolation. It needs to be considered in a holistic manner. The resolution of disputes through violence is against the very ideals that the United Nations espouses. Political differences should be resolved through inclusive dialogue with the participation of all protagonists.

The Syrian people have suffered enough. The bloodshed in Syria must come to an immediate end. We strongly condemn the use of force by all sides in Syria. The Syrian people need political space to regain the societal equilibrium that is so essential for peacebuilding.

The primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of the Syrian people rests with the Syrian Government. We call upon the Syrian Government to make sure that the rights of all its citizens are protected in conformity with its national and international obligations. The Syrian opposition should also abjure the use of force.

It is essential that the Syrian Government and other forces create the conditions necessary for national dialogue and reconciliation. It is only through inclusive dialogue and a political process that Syria can chart out a course towards a stable, secure and prosperous future. The irresponsible and indiscriminate use of arms by whoever must cease forthwith.

Regrettably, efforts by the international community have thus far not borne fruit, as violence continues to escalate. There is a need for creative thinking and a departure from stated positions. We still feel that the six-point plan presented by outgoing Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan offered the best possible solution to end the fratricidal conflict in Syria. We reiterate our call on the Council to send a united message to all parties for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Syria.

We welcome the appointment of Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi. He needs our full support for a successful conclusion of his mission to bring an amicable end to the killings and violence in Syria. We urge all parties, in and outside Syria, to cooperate with the Joint Special Envoy for the success of his mission. An international community working with unity and clarity of purpose is the only hope for the people of Syria. Our ultimate objective remains a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution without outside interference.

The ongoing crisis in Syria should not distract the international community's attention from the unresolved Palestinian issue, which remains at the heart of the tension and conflict in the Middle East region. Pakistan condemns illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and efforts to change the Arab character of the holy land. Pakistan supports the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State on Palestinian land, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

To conclude, let me reiterate that we remain committed to a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Syria and will continue to support the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy in that regard. We feel that the revival of efforts aimed at a political settlement is the need of the hour. The six-point plan and the final communiqué of the meeting of the Action Group on Syria provide a

sound basis to that end. The international community should work to build upon them in a constructive spirit.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal) (*spoke in French*): Portugal would like to thank France for having organized this extremely timely debate.

As the months go by, the world helplessly watches as a most savage repression is unleashed against a people who are only asking for the recognition and respect of their most basic rights. The Damascus regime responds to such legitimate requests with only force, bombing civilians with heavy weapons, destroying entire neighbourhoods, killing and wounding thousands and forcing thousands of others into exile.

We have waited too long to put an end to this appalling and unacceptable situation. We have failed too long in our duty as the Security Council and have too long allowed the worst violations of fundamental rights to continue as if nothing were happening. I very much hope that today's debate will provide a much-needed jolt to the international conscience and finally bring about a new desire to act together to put an end to this tragedy and the suffering of an entire people.

We have heard Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Guterres speak of the seriousness and extent of the situation. I would like sincerely to thank them for their statements. We have also heard from the Ministers of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and I thank them for being here and for their important statements.

We are indeed facing a genuine humanitarian disaster, which, beyond its direct impact on the Syrian people, is likely to further destabilize an already fragile region. Even worse, this situation is deteriorating every day as the violence and repression increase.

(*spoke in English*)

As I said, this human tragedy could have been averted had the Syrian Government not responded to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people with sheer brutal force and by resorting to the use of tanks, helicopter gunships and fighter jets against civilians.

Let us be clear: such actions are illegal under international law and totally unacceptable, no matter the circumstances. The humanitarian impact of increasing Government violence against ordinary people, including women and children, is extremely severe and places hundreds of thousands at risk. As we heard, the numbers are absolutely shocking.

Entire families have been uprooted from their homes. Essential services are denied to thousands. Women and children are particularly vulnerable. Large refugee communities within Syria have also been seriously affected, be they Palestinian, Iraqi or of other nationalities.

The tragic situation is placing enormous strain on host communities both inside and outside Syria. As we have also heard, local response mechanisms and support networks have exhausted their capacities and are no longer able to respond to such urgent and overwhelming needs. In neighbouring host countries, humanitarian assistance resources are rapidly reaching the breaking point.

Portugal is deeply thankful to the Governments and people of Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey for the generosity, solidarity and selflessness with which they have harboured all those fleeing persecution and violent repression in Syria. We also praise the heroic efforts of the humanitarian relief organizations on the ground, which, despite the many constraints and security risks, continue to work diligently, bringing much-needed relief to an increasing number of people. There is clearly a pressing need to scale up humanitarian assistance inside Syria and to increase support to the countries hosting Syrian refugees. The needs of both must be urgently met, so that all Syrians in want, whether inside Syria or outside its borders, can be assisted. We also recall the humanitarian commitments the Government of Syria undertook within the framework of the six-point plan, and we urge the Syrian authorities to enable greater humanitarian access to the country. Finally, we underscore the obligations of all sides under international humanitarian law and call upon all parties to respect civilians and do their utmost to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need.

For over 18 months now, the Syrian Government has sought to crush dissent through brutal repression and widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights. It has killed, maimed and tortured, and carries on doing so.

Portugal vehemently condemns all human rights violations and abuses, for which there can be absolutely no tolerance, regardless of the perpetrator. Those responsible for such violations and abuses must be and will be held accountable. We regret that the Syrian Government has shunned every opportunity to search for a political settlement of the present situation. That

was particularly the case when it refused to engage with Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan in his efforts to end the violence and to open the way for the peaceful transition desired by the majority of the Syrian people. Instead, the Syrian Government preferred to blatantly disregard its commitments under the six-point plan, to consistently and systematically violate resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and to intensify its military operations against populated areas, thus exacerbating the humanitarian crisis even further.

That criminal choice of action has launched the country into a destructive spiral of violence, pushing it to a full-ledged civil war and threatening the integrity of Syria itself, while destabilizing its neighbours and menacing regional peace and security. Another very worrisome aspect is the risk posed by the existing stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons inside Syria. Not only is the use of such arms prohibited under international law, but the Syrian authorities are responsible for ensuring their safe storage.

Further militarization of the conflict can only lead to additional human suffering and will aggravate the humanitarian crisis even more. There is no alternative to a political solution based on the six-point plan and a Syrian-led political transition, as set forth in the 30 June final communiqué of the Action Group. Even at this late hour, we appeal to the Syrian Government to engage seriously in such a political solution.

In that context, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. We wish to assure him of our full support. His chances of success will indeed depend greatly on the support he receives from the international community and the Security Council. It is crucial that all parties and stakeholders view his appointment as an opportunity to end the violence and engage seriously in an inclusive political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

It is time for the Security Council to finally live up to its responsibilities, to learn from the lessons of the past and to stand on the right side of history. To be effective and credible, the Council has to exert united, sustained and effective pressure on all sides, and on the Syrian authorities in particular, in the light of their primary responsibilities under the six-point plan. Portugal will continue to engage with all members of the Council, the League of Arab States and the Group of Friends of Syria with a view to ending all forms of violence and ensuring a political transition that promotes stability and peace in Syria and the region.

Finally, on behalf of Portugal, I would like to conclude by thanking Special Envoy Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts to promote a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Syria. His service to the Syrian people and the cause of peace deserves to be highly commended.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank France for its initiative in convening this meeting, and I welcome Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who is presiding over the meeting. My thanks also go to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their briefings. I have also listened very carefully to the statements by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Jordan and Turkey, the Minister for Social Affairs of Lebanon and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

The persistent tensions encompassing Syria have not only caused huge casualties but have also seriously damaged the infrastructure and people's lives in Syria. With the economy in serious decline, food, drinking water, medical facilities and housing are in short supply. The number of internally displaced persons and refugees continues to increase. About 2.5 million people are in dire need of humanitarian relief. Neighbouring countries, such as Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, are sheltering a large number of refugees, and as a result they face mounting economic and social pressures.

China is gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Syria. We hope that the Syrian Government will continue to cooperate with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian relief agencies inside and outside Syria that are carrying out their work under very difficult conditions. We also appreciate the important contribution of Syria's neighbours in properly resettling refugees.

The Chinese Government has always supported the United Nations and other international organizations in their efforts to alleviate humanitarian situations on the ground. We have provided emergency humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people and are prepared to provide more emergency supplies to relevant countries in the near term in order to improve the humanitarian situation for the Syrian refugees on their territories.

Concerning the emergency measures to be taken by the international community to ease the humanitarian situation in Syria, I wish to stress the following three points.

First, efforts to ease the humanitarian situation in Syria must be guided by the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and respect for Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. The politicization of humanitarian issues must be avoided. Humanitarian relief efforts should never be militarized. We should especially guard against and oppose any act of interference in Syria's internal affairs or military intervention under the pretext of humanitarianism. Only with the trust and support of the Syrian people can our actions be successful.

Secondly, the United Nations should play a leading role in coordinating international humanitarian relief efforts for Syria. China calls on all parties in Syria to observe relevant international law and to maintain cooperation with the United Nations and other humanitarian relief agencies, so as to ensure the timely delivery and distribution of supplies. Given the considerable financial shortfall in the international humanitarian relief for Syria, China calls on relevant countries to fully honour their assistance pledges in a timely manner.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in Syria must be addressed with an eye to dealing with both the symptoms and the root causes. The failure on the part of all parties in Syria to deliver on their commitment to a ceasefire and a cessation of the violence has caused the situation to worsen. Mr. Annan's six-point plan and the Action Group's Geneva communiqué have not been implemented, although they reflect the consensus of the international community. The top priority now is to halt all forms of terrorism and violence in Syria as soon as possible. Any encouragement of or conniving to prolong continued military action will only lead to more bloodshed, increased civilian causalities and a deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Syria. An immediate ceasefire and end to the violence is the only way out, followed by a transitional political process led by the Syrian people themselves.

China's position on the Syrian issue is consistent and responsible. We support a political settlement of the issue in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations. The implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, Mr. Annan's six-point plan and the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria should continue. The Syrian issue should be resolved through a political process led by the Syrian people.

China opposes any externally imposed solution aimed at forcing a regime change. We welcome Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi's appointment as the new Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria and we will, as always, support and cooperate with him in his political good offices.

We stand ready to work with the international community on joint and sustained efforts aimed at a peaceful, fair and appropriate solution of the Syrian issue.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in French*): I take the opportunity to begin my statement by thanking you, Sir, for convening this meeting of the Security Council.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Mr. Annan's six-point plan was stillborn. First Arab observers and then United Nations observers bore false witness by saying no to a peaceful political solution and national dialogue, offering no other solution than providing weapons to the opposition. They have said that foreign military intervention and the fall of the regime are non-negotiable points. Safe corridors, buffer zones and provisional Governments must be established.

The struggle against the authority of the Syrian State and the fall of its institutions are irreversible. The Syrian President has lost all legitimacy and should relinquish power. Those are quotes from official statements attributed to representatives of certain countries represented here in the Council, and from others of our region. Those words represent the very substance of the statements and tendencies of certain Arab, regional and international parties supporting the armed groups and representing them outside of Syria.

How is it possible, then, to put an end to the violence and resolve the crisis in Syria by peaceful means? Is it not high time for us all to learn the lessons of the disasters brought about by foreign interventionist policies carried out by certain influential international Powers aimed at interfering in the internal affairs of other Member States?

As a counterpart, the Syrian Government has responded with openness and a positive spirit to the legitimate claims of its people and all initiatives aimed at settling the crisis by peaceful and political means, including Mr. Annan's six-point plan, which is clearly supported by Syria. To implement the plan, Syria has fully cooperated with the Supervision Mission by making all the necessary facilities available in accordance with agreements made with the United Nations through the efforts of Mr. Annan and based on respect for national sovereignty.

Syria also welcomed the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria, issued after its meeting in Geneva on 30 June. In accordance with an official communiqué issued by the Syrian Foreign Minister, my country consented to the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria. I take this opportunity to warmly welcome him.

But what is odd is that certain States that rallied the consensus for the final communiqué then did everything they could to stifle it just hours after its issuance. They did so through non-consensual parallel efforts aimed at ending all endeavours towards a peaceful end to the crisis in Syria. Such efforts would put an end to the national Syrian-led dialogue by promoting an inevitable and imminent military intervention under humanitarian pretexts, which confirms the existence of a virtually hysterical obsession among the leaders of those countries to target Syria both as a country and as a people.

The erroneous and subjective reading of the situation by certain people, policies based on internal interference in Syrian affairs, and the failure on the part of certain countries to cooperate with the six-point plan are all factors that contributed to the resignation of Mr. Annan and the decision not to extend the Supervision Mission in Syria.

Today, we would like to see the clear intentions of those who talk of addressing the humanitarian aspects of the crisis. There are those who claim that they wish to help the Syrian people, provided, however, that such assistance goes only to the last Syrian in Syria.

It is patently clear, alas, that certain States can only view the issue of humanitarian aid in the framework of their own biased political agenda. They refer to aid to support their own interests in interfering in the internal affairs of other States. If this meeting is truly focused on a discussion of the best possible ways of providing humanitarian aid to the Syrian people, why then have some insisted on promoting actions outside the framework of the United Nations, in clear contravention of the text of the Charter of the United Nations?

We fail to understand how it is that certain countries provide their modest sums of humanitarian aid via the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) while imposing prior conditions. At the same time, those States have imposed unfair economic sanctions, which have had serious humanitarian repercussions on the lives of the Syrian people, inflicting damage on their means of subsistence and well-being, even depriving them of medicines and medical equipment. Who can understand why certain States have done everything in their power to suspend Syria's membership of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the pretext of sympathy with the Syrian people? And speaking of humanitarian aid in Syria, some of those States have not even contributed funds to the regional response plan approved by OCHA and the Syrian Government, although they are aware that funding is the major obstacle to the implementation of the plan.

In that regard, I would like to recall a well-known Chinese saying that states that wisdom begins with calling things by their real names. In that context we believe that, to the extent that the intentions are sincere, the best way to aid the Syrian people is, first of all, by dealing with the causes of the suffering, since the continuing efforts of the armed groups, which are operating with external support, to destroy the means of subsistence — such as infrastructure, health and education institutions, communication channels, power sources, places of worship and museums — while encouraging violence and intimidating peaceful citizens, are all factors that explain this intolerable suffering, exacerbated by the armed groups' attempts to exercise military control over residential areas in various principal cities, using civilians as human shields. I would urge the Council to read an article by the British journalist Robert Fisk in *The Independent* on what he saw in Aleppo. It corroborates what I have been talking about here.

His description tallies precisely with what has been admitted by senior United Nations officials, such as Major General Mood and others. There is further proof in the fact that the armed groups refer to the Battle of Homs, the Great Battle of Damascus and the Battle

of Aleppo as if they were battles happening beyond Syria's borders or between Syria and a foreign State. It is undeniable, after all, that Homs and Aleppo are both Syrian cities.

In that regard, we must ask if there is any State in the world that would allow armed elements, terrorists and mercenaries supported by foreigners to control neighbourhoods in its towns? Is there any Government that would agree to suspend its duty to protect its citizens, leaving them at the mercy of extremism, terrorism and violence? Let me back up my statements with facts. Here is a list of 107 names of Arab and non-Arab terrorists who have died in Aleppo, killed by the forces of order. It includes names, nationalities and other details, and we are happy to provide it to anyone who is interested. It includes Tunisians, Libyans, Saudis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and so on. Those persons were not Syrian citizens.

For decades, Syria has hosted millions of refugees from Iran owing to hostile acts that had nothing to do with Syria. Mr. Guterres, who is at this meeting, knows full well what we are talking about, because he has personally witnessed the hospitality Syria has shown towards Arab and non-Arab refugees, freely welcomed by my country, without seeking to promote or profit from them in any international forum or authority.

My country has not just put up tents to shelter the refugees who have sought asylum on our territory. It has not just welcomed them in camps on its borders or in the desert in order to exploit or manipulate their hopes. On the contrary, Syria has done its duty, sharing its meagre resources with them and treating them just as it treats its own citizens, sharing the brotherly ties of humane responsibility and in accordance with its international commitments.

Today we Syrians feel deep bitterness and sorrow at the sight of some of our brothers, living in terrible conditions in tents on our borders while attempts are made to intimidate them into not returning home. Their dignity is being insulted; they are being turned into refugees, prisoners of those camps. At best, one would describe them as detention camps. We ask those countries that have taken in Syrian refugees to allow all those who wish to return to do so, and not to prevent them from returning to their motherland, Syria. That said, we would also like to thank all who have extended the hand of friendship to Syrian refugees without imposing preconditions, let alone transforming some of those camps into military centres where terrorists gather to train so that they can then be sent to Syria to commit their vile crimes, as is still happening in Aleppo.

What certain capitals may be planning and plotting for Syria is one thing; what the Syrian people want is another, namely, genuine reforms and a better life. The challenges are not only about legitimate aspirations for reform; the greater challenge right now is to protect Syria as an independent State, and to counter the extremist terrorist agendas that aim to condemn Syria — a country with a history of tolerance and civilization — to the dark ages and to inquisitional tribunals. Syria has always been and will remain a land for Syrians of every stripes; it was a civilization even before it was a State.

We listened attentively to the statement made by His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France on 29 July. He said, "they are being supplied with weapons. According to the information we have, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and probably others are supplying weapons." We understand "them" to mean the armed groups in Syria.

Given that statement, we would like to know if France, with that information on arms trafficking to Syria, would take the appropriate measures necessary as a permanent member of the Security Council and current Council President in order to ensure scrupulous respect for the articles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and the spirit of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). No one can ignore the fact that turning a deaf ear to arms trafficking to armed elements in Syria flouts all those provisions.

Major Turkish and international newspapers have reported the role played by the Turkish Government, not the Turkish people — those neighbourly, friendly people linked to us historically and geographically. The international press has referred of the role of Turkey in spillilng Syrian blood. Why do we say that? Mr. Kofi Annan attributed his lack of success to three main causes, one of which involved the lack of cooperation on the part of States and parties that have influence over the armed groups. Certainly, everybody knows that if the neighbouring country, in this case Turkey, had merely hosted Syrian refugees, it would have done nothing. However, given the fact that Turkey is harboring armed elements that perpetrate cross-border crimes on my country's territory and the fact

that Turkey is allowing those groups to set up training camps for Salafist extremist groups and for groups that are attempting to go back to prehistoric times, in that regard, the Turkish Government — its Government, not the Turkish people — is becoming Syria's executioner. I would have liked to have said that directly to His Excellency the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, and not to my friend and brother the Ambassador of Turkey, whose moral integrity and great moral probity I know full well.

The arms trafficking through Lebanon is being perpetrated by Lebanese political parties, and not officially by Lebanon. The President says that it is Lebanon's turn. When the Lebanese Government confiscated the *Lutfallah II* loaded with arms coming from Libya, it must have truly called down the wrath of God. The seizure by the Lebanese authorities of that weapons-loaded vessel bound for Syria is an event that is not worthy of the very close links between the two countries. That vessel was followed by seven others, also loaded with arms and intended for Syrian armed groups.

His Excellency the Minister for Social Affairs of Lebanon regretted the presence of 20,000 Syrians in Lebanon. I would like to remind him that, after the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in 2006, our aircraft welcomed tens of thousands of Lebanese in Syria. We did not turn to the Council to ask for help. On the contrary, we welcomed our Lebanese brothers with open arms.

The closure by certain States of their Embassies in Damascus means that it is no longer possible for those States to follow the real events as they happen in Syria. In turn, that means that they are not able to accurately analyse the facts and the situation. I therefore cannot reproach the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco for what he said because I do not wish to rub salt in a wound. I invite him to adjust his aim and readjust Morocco's relationship with other countries by responding to the demands of the Moroccan people and renouncing certain royal practices that have become archaic. Morocco should renounce such practices which involve, for example, kneeling before His Majesty the King and kissing his hand. Also, with regard to the border, there are people living in the Sahara who are demanding their rights.

(*spoke in French*)

At the beginning of my professional career, more precisely during the first seven-year term of Mr. François Mitterand, I spent a lovely part of my life as a young diplomat in the Syrian Embassy in France. I retain excellent memories from the time I spent among the French and at the centre of French and, more specifically, Parisian academic, cultural and educational establishments. At the time, I learned about the values of national independence and having an uncompromising attitude in the face of foreign interference in the internal affairs of any country. I was obviously also familiar with the major universal messages of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire and others.

Among the fine principles of international law of which I learned during my post-graduate studies in Paris, I recall today one in particular that I hold very dear, namely, the principle of respect for the most sovereign of State symbols in each nation: a country's President. I shall therefore refrain from making the slightest criticism of France and its senior representatives. That said, as the Minister spoke to me directly as the representative of my country, I would like, on behalf of my people and Government, to express our most serious concern regarding the new shadow that has been cast on our troubled relations and memories going back to the period of the occupation. We have endeavoured to expunge those memories since 1946.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

To conclude, I would like to turn to my colleague, His Excellency the representative of Germany, who called for the establishment of the Syria of the future for all Syrians, irrespective of their origin. He also said that there was no future for Bashar Al-Assad in the new Syria. I would like to ask him who authorizes him to speak on behalf of the Syrian people. Is that not a violation of diplomatic practice in the Council? Secondly, if the Permanent Representative of Germany really wants to build the Syria of the future for all Syrians, why did the German daily newspaper *Die Welt* publish an article two days ago stating that

> "The German Government is currently working in the Bundestag on a plan to make the necessary arrangements to host the Christians from Syria"?

I reiterate that that plan refers only of hosting Christians from Syria. Why only Christians? Why do

we want to dismantle this Syrian society that we have all praised? The answer is in the Council's hands.

The President (*spoke in French*): As the representative of Syria has referred to the mandate that France exercised in Syria on behalf of the League of Nations, I would recall that President Al-Assad's grandfather was part of a delegation that, in 1936, requested that France not grant Syria its independence. We can provide the text of the petition that was signed on that occasion. I will not add any more on that point, but since he did refer to French authors, I would advise him to meditate on Talleyrand, who said "what is excessive is insignificant". What the representative of Syria has said is truly excessive.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): I will be brief. We had not intended to take the floor again, but we find ourselves obliged to do so.

I have listened to my colleague, the Permanent Representative of Syria. I think an attempt was made to represent the facts about our position with regard to Syria. In that respect, the crisis in Syria, which is, for us, a threat to regional and global peace and security, does not need further description. That is taking place right before our eyes.

As a country that neighbours Syria and shares not only a long border but also a long history and close cultural ties, we have always stood for the security, stability and prosperity of Syria. Its territorial integrity and national unity is sacrosanct for all of us. What could be a more relevant and important vested interest for Turkey than bringing an end to the crisis in Syria without further delay? We will continue to stand by the Syrian people, who must be the masters of their own future. We will never leave them in the cold.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Faour (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, this meeting is devoted to the issue of Syrian refugees. We are not here to conduct a political debate. That is a general comment.

In addition, the Lebanese Government has chosen a policy of keeping its distance from the Syrian crisis, but we do have some comments that we would like to make.

With respect to the trafficking of weapons through Lebanon by certain parties that are not official Lebanese parties, the official Lebanese parties are doing everything possible to stop any type of trafficking. Lebanon does not want to be part of the Syrian crisis. I would recall the historic request of Lebanon with respect to the demarcation of borders and promoting security at the borders. That has not been upheld, nor has it been taken into consideration. On the contrary, in the past, it has been denied.

With respect to the *Lutfullah II*, I would recall that the official Lebanese parties did seize that ship. There are investigations under way on that matter, and thus the legal and security sectors in Lebanon are carrying out their duties. With respect to the other vessels, I think they may be imaginary. We have not heard about them.

The last issue I would raise is the idea that we are complaining about the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. I think I was absolutely clear in that regard. We are not complaining about Syrian refugees in Lebanon. What we said is that the Syrian people hosted some of the Lebanese people in 2006. This is a chance to repay the favour to the Syrian people. We are not complaining, nor are we asking for assistance in that area. We chose to participate in this meeting on a different basis, the humanitarian basis.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): When our Minister took the floor in the Council, he conveyed certain convictions of Morocco and our commitment with regard to the entirety of the Syrian people. A few moments ago, the representative of Syria decided to openly attack virtually all the members of the Council. I understand his distress. He is unable to rise to the expectations of the international community with respect to a political solution, a cessation of the violence and respect for human rights. It seems that he has chosen to believe that the best defence is a good offence.

He presumed to talk about Morocco in response to what our Minister said. The representative of Syria presumed to talk about Morocco's reforms and the royal protocol. When our Minister spoke, he spoke on behalf of the 32 million Moroccans. He expressed the beliefs of the entire Moroccan people, who throughout history have never faltered in taking the side of Arab peoples, starting with the Syrian people. Morocco's Royal Armed Forces have spilled their own blood to defend Syria's territorial integrity. But we did it willingly, expecting neither recognition nor gratitude.

The Moroccan monarchy is an ancestral monarchy, and one that adapts, evolves and reforms itself. For that reason Morocco distinguished itself in the Arab Spring by a peaceful, forward-looking road to change whereby our country now has one of the most progressive Constitutions, which brought about profound reforms supported by the vast majority of Moroccans. I can therefore assure the Syrian representative that the 32 million Moroccan citizens take great pride not only in the work of His Majesty the King but also in the Moroccan monarchy itself and what it brings with it. And when they express respect for the institution of the monarchy they do it willingly and do not need anyone's approval, least of all that of the Syrian representative.

As far as him bringing up the question of the Sahara, I will very simply remind him that we are here to discuss Syria in the context of the situation in the Middle East. If he wants to discuss the Sahara we can talk about it when the time comes.

The last thing I will say is that the Syrian representative's words make me think of something he will certainly understand — a most eloquent passage of Arabic poetry by Al-Mutanabbi:

(*spoke in Arabic*)

"Being criticized by a lesser person proves that I am perfect."

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in this meeting.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.